

## General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

### Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team*

## The Bhaddali Sutta Seminar

### Held at: Padmaloka

Present: Sangharakshita, Subhuti, Kovida, Sthirananda, Prasannasiddhi, Alaya

Day 1 Tape 1 Side A

Subhuti: This is Subhuti, and I believe we're awaiting the beginning of this seminar.

Prasannasiddhi: This is Prasannasiddhi. I'm taping this seminar as well as participating in it.

Kovida: Kovida - I've got a Scottish accent.

Alaya: This is Alaya.

Sthirananda: Sthirananda - I have a Yorkshire accent. (laughter and indistinct words)

S: How many copies of the text do we have?

Subhuti: Three.

S: So where are they? I've got one, there's one there and one here. Would you start reading there, then. I think that the text does fall into sections; I think it would be good to read through down to where that Roman, that boldface number is 438 down to that paragraph ...

S: 107.

: What page are we on?

Subhuti: " Thus have I heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's monastery. While he was there the Lord addressed the monks, saying "Monks." "Revered one," these monks answered the Lord in assent. The Lord spoke thus: "I, monks, partake of my food at one session. Partaking of my food at one session, I, monks, am aware of good health and of being without illness and of buoyancy and strength and living in comfort. Come, do you too, monks, partake of your food at one session. Partaking of your food at one session. you too, monks, will be aware of good health, of being without illness, of buoyancy and strength and living in comfort." When this had been said, the venerable Bhaddali spoke thus to the Lord: "I, revered sir, am not capable of eating my food at one session: revered sir, if I ate my food at one session, I might have [2] scruples. I might have misgivings." "Well then, you, Bhaddali, having eaten one portion there where you were invited, having taken another portion away, might eat that too; so could you, Bhaddali, eating thus, keep yourself going"

S: Mmm, yes, the next paragraph as well.

Subhuti: "I, revered sir, am not capable of eating in this fashion; even eating so, revered sir. I might have scruples, I might have misgivings."

S: So what is the subject of discussion? This is the real - I mean what is it that the Buddha is saying that He does and which He's asking the monks to do and why does He ask them to do it? This is really the question, isn't it? The Buddha says: "I, monks, partake of my food at one session." First of all one has to understand what that means. The word for one session is

ekasana literally it's ekasana (bhojanam kunjami): I eat one session food. Though it seems to me that (bhojana) and (kunjami) - (kunjami) means to eat, to enjoy, and (bhojana) come from the same root. It isn't as in English: we've got 'food' comes from one root and 'eat' comes from another root, yes? Anyway, ekasana (bhojanam kunjami), which means one session food I eat. Ekasana (bhojanam) that's a compound: food eaten at one session, or I could translate it: I eat food eaten at one session (unclear). "I, monks, partake of my food at one session," This 'my' is not in the original. So what is this ekasana (bhojana)? What is this food eaten or partaken of at one session? Actually the translation is not literal. It says 'at one session': it should... the more literal translation would be at one sitting: asana is seat, yes?

Subhuti: Ah, oh right, yes.

S: Food partaken of at one sitting. So what does that mean?

Subhuti: One meal a day: you sit down and you eat it.

S: No, no, you sit down and eat it but ...

Kovida: You eat straight through, you don't stop.

S: No. Well, what would one mean by stopping?

Kovida: There's only one course to it. (laughter)

S: No, no, no, it's ekasana: at one sitting.

: Come together, once.

S: No. (laughter)

Prasannasiddhi: He doesn't sort of ponder all day over his food.

S: No.

: He only collects (unclear) he's going to eat (unclear).

S: No, wait a minute. Perhaps one has to give a little background here. The Buddha appears from a subsequent paragraph to have said: "Well then, you [3] Bhaddali, having eaten one portion there where you were invited" ... the context of the discussion is a monk, having been invited to a layman's house for a meal, the (bhojana) ... he's advised by the Buddha, following His own example to eat at one session or at one sitting. What does that mean? Kovida: Does it mean just at one house, only going to one

S: No, no, it's pretty obvious. (laughter)

: In one fashion.

S: No, but what exactly, well yes, but what would that fashion be? (pause)

It's pretty obvious that what the Buddha is asking them to do is eat at one sitting, that is to say to complete their meal without rising from their seat in the course of the meal. Do you see what I mean? They're to remain seated in the same place during the whole of the meal, not eat a bit and then get up and walk about and then come back to the seat and finish off the meal. Do you see what I mean?

: Why should they do that? (laughter)

S: Well, that's another question, that's another matter, but this is what the Buddha is asking them to do. This is why it's called ekasana (bhojana) food eaten at one sitting.

Subhuti: So very literally one sitting.

S: Very literally one sitting. I happen to know this because it's still regarded as undesirable or impolite for a monk to get up in the course of a meal even to go and get something, even to go and get ... well, a monk shouldn't actually get anything in the way of food but if he was to get up and go and say get the pepper or salt this would be breaking this ekasana (bhojanam) rule. Do you see what I mean?

Subhuti: So that's the full .. that's the full strength and force of what He's saying? Don't get up and wander about during the meal ...

S: Well, no, not break it in any way. Now we might consider why the Buddha is asking them to do that. That's another matter. Another question is how this relates to the (bikala bhojanam) rule. There seem to be - I tried to find the original source of the (bikala bhojana) rule - I couldn't do that... but the (bikala) ... it would seem that earlier in the Buddha's career, after the Enlightenment, bhikkhus ate at least twice a day. They ate an evening meal, then. they went begging so to speak twice a day, but then as far as I remember the story goes that a bhikkhu begging in the evening when it was, when it had become dark, frightened a pregnant woman who thought that it was a ghost standing there outside the door and she had a miscarriage and therefore a complaint was made to the Buddha and then He passed a rule or made a rule that the bhikkhus should not go begging in the evening, and that they should not eat (bikala bhojana) untimely food. That has always been understood to mean that they should not eat anything after 12 o'clock. Do you see what I mean? The modern understanding [4] of that is that one may eat any number of times before twelve o'clock. You're still observing the (bikala bhojana) rule. Do you see what I mean? So in some Buddhist countries, as in Burma, the monks do get three meals actually a day sometimes. You see you're not supposed to start, though, before dawn, you're not supposed to start before you can see the lines on your own hand. But some in .. I have heard that in Burma for instance monks get up very early in the morning as soon as it's dawn and they have a hasty breakfast. They go back to bed. They get up and have a proper breakfast and then they have their lunch before 12 o'clock. This is an example, you could say, of Theravadin literalism and formalism. But this is considered as conforming to the Vinaya, certainly conforming to the letter of it. Though more usually monks are a bit more reasonable, they just have a breakfast when they get up and assuming ... though it must be light, they can't eat before it's light, and they have another meal just before noon, this is the usual pattern.

Subhuti: You say that it's usually understood as meaning before midday. Is it drawn out in

that way in the Vinaya or does it just say untimely food?

S: This I would have to check. I think even in the Buddha's day it was understood to mean after 12 because He prohibited an afternoon meal, an evening meal. But as I said there is this question of the relation between (bikala bhojana) and this rule. This rule would seem to apply to invitations to eat at the houses of lay people because not only could the monk go and beg his food from door to door and then return to his own place wherever that was and eat it, but he could be invited to somebody's house and this rule would seem to be referring to those sort of occasions where you were invited to somebody's house, and you sat down and you were served. So the Buddha is saying that His practice is that He partakes of His food on such occasions in one session and He's advising the other monks to do likewise. So the question arises, well what sort - I mean, also this is one of the rules, if one can call it a rule, which He doesn't make as a result of anything that has happened, because He's staying at Savatthi and He addresses the monks, He calls out to them, and they respond and then He says: "I monks, partake of my food at one session." It's as though the idea just occurs to Him, just to tell them this is what He does. They've not misbehaved in any way as far as we know. And He also goes on to give a reason but that's another matter. But it's... therefore it's important to understand first of all what is meant by this partaking of food at one session. It means without interrupting the meal by getting up from your seat on those occasions when you are invited to the house of the laity, So that's the first point.

Subhuti: So on what grounds is He...

S: (interrupting) Well, have we got that clear first? That is clear -what it actually consists in that you don't rise, you don't in the course of a meal get up from your seat. You'd obviously be sitting on the ground in those days. [5] You don't get up from your seat and either wander about and do something else and then return to your seat and then finish off the meal. You do not interrupt the meal in that sort of way. You eat it without moving from that seat. This is called ekasana (bhojana), that kind of eating, that kind of food. So that is clear to begin with what it actually consists in. All right then, the Buddha says: "Partaking of my food at one session, I, monks, am aware of good health, and of being without illness, and of buoyancy, and strength, and living in comfort". So apparently the Buddha regards it as a good thing to eat in this way. So one might ask, well, is it conducive to good health, and to being without illness, and of buoyancy and strength, and living in comfort? The Buddha seems to be taking this quite seriously. So what sort of situation might he have in mind? Would it conduce to one's bad health, and being with illness, etc, etc, if one was to do the sort of thing that the rule seems intended to prevent? So what sort of civil situation did the Buddha have in mind, or what possible alternative?

Subhuti: Something that immediately springs to mind - I'm not quite sure to what extent it might apply to bhikkhus but if you are rushing around and you eat while you're doing that you can't digest properly.

S: There is that, yes. It could be just out of restlessness to interrupt the meal. In theory you may be served with several courses and you just get a bit restless waiting on the next course to come on, you get up and wander around and then you come back. Is it, I mean is it not, I mean one does hear this when one is younger - you shouldn't sort of get up and walk about when you're supposed to be eating, or in between different courses. It's supposed to be not very good for you. I don't know what foundation there is for that.

Sthirananda: A sort of mindfulness of sustenance, something that is quite important for one to function, and if one hasn't got one's mind on that then it is actually not sustenance and is something that's taken for granted.

S: Well it would suggest, I mean, if you interrupt your meal to get up and do something else, it would suggest a certain amount of distraction, distractedness. Well you do, don't you, find that there are people who do this, always jumping up in between, sometimes with a piece of bread in their hand, and then they do something else and then they come back. Do you see what I mean?

Prasannasiddhi: So do you think it could be referring to just a whole kind of attitude to have towards one's meals in terms of...

S: Could be, could be.

Prasannasiddhi: You know, being mindful about the whole meal, how much you need for the meal, and setting it all out, then sitting down to eat it.

S: Well no, not necessarily, because you don't know what you are going to be given, because the context is that of an invitation. But what the Buddha seems to be trying to prevent is the interruption of the meal.

Subhuti: He is very definitely talking about health as well, isn't he?

[6]

S: Yes. Yes.

Subhuti: He stresses that. It seems to be on quite practical grounds.

S: Perhaps one should see the original Indian context, bear that in mind. Someone might get up in the course of a meal and have a little wander around, or something like that. I think even nowadays in India it is not regarded as polite to do that. Nor is it in the West, is it? What are the reasons that you might not partake of one's food at one session? Why would ... that would cause one to get up, interrupt the meal and then come back to it?

Alaya: It might be people coming to see you.

S: Don't forget this is the context: you are invited to eat at someone's house. After all. You are a monk and are being treated with a certain amount of respect no doubt. It could be ... I mean ... one could consider ... what business have you got to be ... to get up and wander around in somebody's house where you have been invited for a meal? What would that suggest if you were a monk? In the middle of the meal you just got up and were walking around and that sort of thing.

Subhuti: You got distracted.

S: A bit distracted. Why should you not be just sitting down, patiently, waiting for the next course, eating quietly? Why should you get up and maybe go and walk about outside and then come back? It all does suggest a certain amount of mental restlessness and distraction, doesn't

it? The fact that you should want to interrupt the meal in that way at all.

Alaya: Would the courses ... I mean is it traditionally ... are they brought in quite slowly if you are a guest?

S: Indians usually take their time over their meals especially if there is a guest. The idea is that you are there for quite a while. They like to think that you are going to spend some time there, you are not going to hurry away afterwards, you are not keen to be off as quickly as you can. No doubt the monks were not supposed to linger in the houses of the laity, on the other hand they were supposed to please them and satisfy them and maybe have some discussion with them after the meal. I mean there are people as I said who seem to find it quite difficult to remain seated through a whole meal. They get up on one pretext or another. Have you ever noticed this? Get something, or bring something or go and tell somebody something?

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think that is what ... do you think it is that sort of attitude that is being (unclear)?

S: Well it's difficult to think of anything else.

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps it could be related to this business about how the Indians did take a long time over their meals, and perhaps the Buddha's sort of urging the monks to be more kind of on the ball, more mindful, just think about what they are supposed to be doing with their time, rather than sort of spending, you know, a lot of time over their meals and sort of wasting time.

[7]

S: It doesn't actually say that.

Subhuti: There are quite a lot of the vinaya rules which seem to regulate relations between the bhikkhus as it were and the laity, presumably because the contact of the bhikkhu with the laity was a dangerous, a danger point in a sense.

S: Mmm, yes, also a very frequent thing, yes.

Subhuti; So if the monk is to maintain his sort of wholeheartedness in his sort of full-time life he's got to be really extra careful when he's ...

S: On those sort of occasions yes, that is true, yes,

Prasannasiddhi: So why then should Bhaddali have misgivings and scruples?

S We've not come on to that but I was just thinking of something there is quite a lot said in the Vinaya Pitaka about food and... (Pause)

Kovida; This is ... it isn't the vinaya is it?

S: No, it isn't.

Kovida; So do you think he's actually laying down a rule about that or just making a

recommendation?

S: He seems to be laying down a rule, This comes after (the vinaya?) (Long Pause) Yes, the introduction of the Vinaya Pitaka makes the point that the (partita), that is to say this particular class of offence on meals and eating would provide material for an extensive essay. Then early on the rules on eating were important for monks, for taking nothing but food given in alms involved a threefold maintenance of a correct attitude towards the laity, towards members of other sects and towards fellow monks. The same applied to robes. (Long Pause) There's something I was looking for. I couldn't ...

Subhuti; There's a reference to the (Bikala bhojanam) rule, I don't know whether that's what you were looking for.

S: Yes. but I couldn't trace it in the ...

Subhuti; Vinaya.

S: We don't have a complete Vinaya Pitaka, unfortunately,

Subhuti; It's Vinaya, 4 - 85.

S: Mmmmm. Where does it say that?

Subhuti; It's in the foot-note. Footnote 4.

S: Could you get those for me? (Long Pause) I've got it here - 4,85, but it isn't the original (unclear)? 4,85. This refers to the group of seventeen monks eating a meal at the wrong time. The Buddha asks them and they admit they ate a meal at the wrong time. Then it says, 'Whatever monk eats of or partakes of solid food or soft food at the wrong time, there is an offence of expiation.' There's a note to (bikali) 'see old commentary'. Then it says 'See the vivid description attributed to (Udayin) at Milinda - 1,4,48 of his feelings at the [8] successive injunctions for monks to give up day and evening meals, and his ultimate conviction of the Lords wisdom in stopping alms-giving in the dark of the night. 'Compare also Milinda 1:24 ... and Milinda 1:4:37 where Bhaddali confessed that he had not been able to keep to the regimen of one meal a day.' But I think the translator has missed the point - it's not one meal a day, it's one ... it's eating at one session at a time.

Subhuti: What it seems to be is that first part up to the point to which I read, is talking about one occasion, then it ... then it says: "Then the venerable Bhaddali, while a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord", that rule of training was the (bikala bhojanam). That is what the ... according to the footnote ... that is what the commentary here says.

S: No, I wouldn't say that that was the case, because the Buddha asks ... when he says that he might have scruples, he might have misgivings, the Buddha says "Well then you, Bhaddali, having eaten one portion there where you were invited, having taken another portion away, might eat that too. Could you, Bhaddali, eating thus, keep yourself going?" but he says no still.



Subhuti: Yes, yes.

S: So there is no question of the (bikala) here. The Buddha is saying well, if you weren't able to eat just sitting there in that person's house without getting up from your seat, well if you weren't able to eat enough then, would you be able to manage if you were allowed to take some away with you and eat it somewhere, he still says no. So it doesn't seem to be referring to the (bikala bhojanam) rule here because by the time he got back presumably it would be after twelve o'clock.

Subhuti: Well first of all she seems to be following the commentary.

S: (unclear) Yes

Subhuti: The second point is, I don't, this is the next thing for us to go to, I don't really see how ... what it means for Bhaddali to have scruples about ...

S: Yes, well that, well that's another matter.

Subhuti: ...and why those scruples should be allayed by taking food away.

S: Mmm, mmm. (Pause) But despite what the commentary says, it doesn't seem that the reference is to breaking the (bikala bhojanam) rule.

[9]

Subhuti: No, it doesn't seem to be, no, no.

S: Unless you understand the (bikala bhojanam) rule as necessarily involving eating your food at one session. Not only eating it before 12 but eating it at one session before 12. This is not the modern understanding because monks have several meals before 12.

Prasannasiddhi: It almost sounds as if Bhaddali is a bit of a greedy sort of ... Bhaddali is a bit of a greedy sort of person. There's a reference to his ... er ... he'd been a crow in a former birth and crows.

S: Well, this is from the point of view of the common folk.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, I see, well...

S: I mean how would it be a sign of greed, that he couldn't eat all at one session?

Subhuti: It seems as if they've got a ... you almost get the impression they've got a tradition which they've just fitted this in with, they haven't bothered to look at it really closely.

S: Yes, one often gets that impression, in fact.

Subhuti: So the ekasana (bhojanam) does not appear as a separate rule in the Vinaya?

S: Not that I remember, no, no. Well, no, ah yes and no, because there are references ... there are rules regarding what is called eating out of turn, and that is ... that includes apparently

eating in this particular way, that is breaking this particular rule. I mean, this is why we need to take it step by step, first of all what the Buddha is actually saying, what does eating at one session mean, and then the Buddha's reasons for recommending that, I mean that's actually what we are concerned with ... you made the point that it was in connection with food, that the monks came into contact most often with the lay people, and that obviously was a dangerous occasion, a sort of flash-point, as it were, a danger point, and that may account for the fact that the Buddha was very concerned with those occasions when the monks were eating in the houses of the laity. But the reason He gives actually seems to relate to actual health.

Subhuti: Yes.

S: Of course, one could understand why it might not be advisable for a monk who is being entertained in a layman's house to sort of get up during a meal and just wander about, well he might wander into the women's quarters, or something of that sort, [10] that wouldn't be desirable. And of course from a psychological point of view his getting up and wandering about could indicate restlessness of mind, instability. And also there is the point that when you do something you should just do that thing. When you're eating you should just eat; just have your meal without interruption and get up when you've finished and only then.

Kovida; It would be quite discourteous to get up the best thing would be to sit...

S: Yes, yes. So in the light of the general Indian situation one can understand, well it would be a good thing to partake of one's food at one session when invited to eat at the houses of the laity. But, on the other hand the Buddha does say that he is aware of good health, and of being without illness and of buoyancy and strength and living in comfort as a result of this practice. He seems to be recommending it to the monks on those grounds.

Subhuti; It makes the most direct appeal.

S: Could be, yes, it could be that he's not disclosing the whole of his mind. (Pause)

Prasannasiddhi; How much of what is actually written in the text could one presume was actually spoken at the time?

S: That is another matter entirely. One has to make the best sense one can of text as it has come down and it isn't always easy to make sense of it, because it has been translated in the way it has.

Prasannasiddhi; Perhaps it's lost. It's lost (the first verses?)

S: Anyway is it sort of intelligible that this particular practice of eating one's food at one session might be more conducive to health and strength in other ways? That is intelligible I suppose.

Subhuti; It's a fact that if you're disturbed at the time of eating your digestion is bad.

S; Yes, yes including if you disturb yourself. Also if you go back to this question of the Indian theme. Supposing you have been invited. Someone's gone to the kitchen to get another course

and comes back with it and you are not there - you have just gone wandering around somewhere. But maybe above all it suggests that your mind is not on what you are doing. You have allowed yourself to become distracted and that is of some significance.

Anyway, let's go on to what Bhaddali says.

Subhuti: A couple of points arise out of this first of all. Just the question of the commentary, the status of the commentary. Any little bits of the commentary that I've read ... throughout the [11] Pali Canon seem really contrived and they don't illuminate the text at all. Very seldom.

S: The Pali commentary is supposed to have been translated by Buddhaghosa from Sinhalese originals which are very often quite superficial in their approach ... they are not ... they don't go into things in depth as one might have expected. They often tell stories. Sometimes they are illuminating, but not as much as one might expect. They don't seem usually to represent an attempt by the author of the commentary to get at ... to grips with the meaning of the text on which he is commenting. He tends to record traditions about the text which have come down to him.

Prasannasiddhi: Is the ... who are the commentators?

S: Well that is again another question. The commentator is usually considered to be Buddhaghosa and very likely he is the author or at least the translator of the commentary of this ... Majjhima-Nikaya ... but the commentaries attributed to him are not quite (unclear). The tradition is that the commentaries were translated by Buddhaghosa from old Sinhalese into Pali in Ceylon. You may remember Buddhism was introduced into Ceylon according to tradition at the time of Ashoka, that is about 250 BC. So the text for the oral tradition was written down in the first century AD, and then accompanying that there was an oral tradition of explanation which was written down in the form of commentaries in Sinhalese, not in Pali, and Buddhaghosa translated those in the sixth century. Buddhaghosa in the sixth century translated the Sinhalese commentaries into Pali. We do not have them any longer in Sinhalese.

Prasannasiddhi: In... in, sorry, which century? The sixth ...

S: The sixth as far as we know.

Prasannasiddhi: Gosh, as late as that.

S: Well, this is a thousand years after the Buddha that the commentaries were rendered into Pali. They often contain a lot of interesting historical information and things like that, but they don't seem to get to grips much with the actual meaning of the teaching contained in the text on which they are supposed to be commenting. Not like for instance Shankara's (END OF SIDE ONE)

[12]

Day 1 Tape 1 Side B

S: (cont) commentaries on the Upanishads and sutras.

Subhuti: You almost get the impression of Theravada literalism and formalism at that stage ... a long time ago.

S: Yes indeed, yes.

Subhuti: So...

S: What was your second point?

Subhuti: The way in which the Buddha lays down a rule: for instance, He says: "Come do you monks.. too monks..." what is the force of that in the original Pali? Is he definitely sort of as it were commanding them, making them...

S: Yes, sort of, (unclear). (Pause). M~m yes ...(etha, come, etha come bhikkhu?) means come monks. (Bunjata?) "Do you" ... this is the imperative mood of the verb.

Subhuti: Well that's interesting and significant, isn't it, that he's prepared to definitely lay down what they should do.

S: Well yes, this does happen on occasion because ... I mean, usually it's by way of ethical exhortation, but sometimes much more (unclear) general thing, I mean, 'don't be greedy monks' in fact he may say that so to speak on his own initiative, but here and in a few other passages he does as it were lay down what amounts to a rule as it were on his own initiative. Though usually rules are made when something goes wrong. As this text itself, as we will see says later on. Also there is another point: one gets the impression that in the course of transmission some of the Buddha's teachings and sayings have become invested with a sort of formality and rigidity which they didn't originally possess: I mean the Buddha might have said "Well I don't interrupt my meals. It's a good idea not to do that". Do you see that I mean? Late tradition sees the Buddha as the Buddha, you know, the Enlightened Teacher giving out the Teaching, laying down the Laws, as I think a lot of what might originally have been informality so to speak has been lost in the process of transmission, and suggestions and ideas come across as commands. Do you see what I mean? One can see this happening - Sometimes even the English translation doesn't help... very much, it formalizes it still more.

Sthirananda: Given that informality how would he set about laying down the law?

S: Well in a sense the Buddha didn't lay down rules, it was just advice.

Sthirananda: So you can't say from this that he's setting down a rule in the formal sense.

S: Well according to the ... if you take the text at it's face value, yes, [13] this is what he is doing, yes, but one could argue that the whole idea of laying down rules is not quite in accordance with the original spirit of the Buddha's teaching, one could take that view.

Subhuti: On what grounds?

S: Well, that the Buddha was concerned with the progress of the individual and we get the impression from works such as the Sutta Nipata, which is a very ancient book, that the Buddha didn't care to generalize with regard to human conduct in the way that the laying

down of a rule seems to presuppose. Also, if you lay down a rule, well you are almost suggesting that the observance of that rule is sufficient. I mean, this you know comes out again and again in connection with some of the rules, for instance in the case of the rules regarding relations between monks and members of the opposite sex. Well the Buddha begins for instance by prohibiting sexual intercourse with women, but then the monks try to get round that, some of them, to get round that in various ways, there are all sorts of strange kinds of (contact, which one has) to prohibit again and again and again, you see. So if you lay down a rule you are suggesting almost that the observance of the rule is sufficient in itself and there will always be people who think that they are doing well enough if they just manage to observe that rule. Well, leaving aside rules relating to monks and women, there is the whole question of (bikala bhojana). I mean, assuming that the Buddha laid down a rule that for monks that you should not eat after twelve, well, what was his intention? I mean he clearly didn't attach some magical significance to eating before twelve o'clock, yes, do you see what I mean? In what seem to be the very early parts of the scriptures like the Dhammapada the Buddha speaks simply of moderation in food, moderation in eating, that is the principle. But all right, so if the Buddha does lay down the rule of bikala bhojanam it's to help you to practise moderation in eating, but many bhikkhus today, maybe for hundreds of years, they've taken the bikala bhojanam rule as a sort of end in itself. Do you see what I mean? All right if you just don't eat after twelve o'clock, that's enough, don't need to bother about moderation. But Buddhaghosa even says that if you eat a thousand times before twelve o'clock you are still keeping the bikala bhojana rule. But are you really following the spirit of the Buddha's teaching? So it's as though once you lay down a rule in a way you're in trouble because as soon as you have laid down a rule as distinct from inculcating a principle, you are opening the door to the observance merely of that rule, neglecting or forgetting the principle which underlies it. Do you see what I mean?

Kovida: It' almost sort of inculcates the attitude of rules are made to [14] be broken.

S: Yes (Laughter) Well no.

Subhuti; (interjecting) To be got round.

S: No, rules are made to be got round, yes. If to lay down a rule is to encourage in some people at least an attitude of 'well it's all right if you simply observe the rules' even though in effect you are just getting around them.

Subhuti: Yes, yes yes. But there seem to be quite a number of situations in the Pali Canon in which the Buddha does definitely give an imperative.

S: It would seem so yes.

Subhuti; How must we treat that, I mean do we regard that as a later...

S: I think in some cases yes but I don't think one can in all.

Subhuti; Yes.

S: Perhaps we shall never know.

Subhuti; Yes.

S: I mean which rules were actually laid down by the Buddha and which were later? Perhaps we can never now find that out. But we can see quite clearly the sort of general process of the laying down of a principle, that is to say, well, moderation in food and then laying down rules which are clearly meant to help monks to observe that principle, but which do become ends in themselves so that the principle is in the end lost sight of. Therefore it seems to me best to get back to the original principle and to whatever extent one can to forget about the rules. Do you see what I mean? It's as though the rule having been made you think well if you just observe the rule then you can forget about why you are supposed to be observing it. Just to observe it is enough. Again in the case of this bikala bhojanam well if you don't eat after twelve o'clock well that is all that's expected of a monk. You can be as greedy as you like up to twelve o'clock - one sees this. No moderation at all, provided, it does not matter, provided it's all before twelve o'clock. Well that clearly isn't what the Buddha meant. On the other hand if you are truly moderate does it matter if you eat after twelve o'clock? Does it matter whether you eat after twelve or before?

I mean the Sufis eat only in the evening, they don't eat during the day. Does it really matter?

Prasannasiddhi: Well there was... the reason there was the aspect of that rule of eating before twelve because they were frightening people late in the evening.

S: Well that is again within the context of going for alms. So you could say, well if you are no longer going for alms well is that rule really relevant? But then again some people say the Buddha was just waiting for that occasion or he wanted to make the bikala bhojanam rule [15] anyway (laughter) so he took that opportunity - what some people say, some more rigid people say. Well (unclear) (laughter) Ah, got them now, I'll lay down the bikala bhojanam rule. (Pause).. But it does seem to be almost a natural human tendency to think that it's enough to obey the rule, you know, people seem to have, to experience a sort of satisfaction that they are doing, obeying the rule, that they are doing the right thing even though they are ignoring or even breaking the spirit of the rule, the principle that's involved entirely. After all, a rule is quite easily identifiable ... I mean it's very difficult to know whether someone is really being moderate in food, moderate in eating, that is not easy to know. Perhaps it's impossible to know. But it's very easy to tell whether someone is eating after twelve o'clock or not - all you have to do is to look at the clock. So it's easy to follow a rule in comparison to really sort of watch yourself and observe yourself and to know whether you really are being moderate and taking just what is needed, not more than that. That is much more difficult - you have to monitor yourself more closely, understand your system more closely or better. But if you just don't eat after twelve well you dispose of the matter (unclear). One of the things I used to comment on when I was in the East was that so many Sinhalese bhikkhus apparently observed the bikala bhojanam rule but at least 75% of them were very much overweight. When I asked them how that was they just used to laugh. (Laughter). But you rarely saw a thin bhikkhu, very rarely. Thin lay people seemed to be more common than thin monks. In a way it would seem to rely upon a rule, it deprives one of responsibility. I mean no doubt there is the danger here also - someone can claim to be just mindful of the principle and applying that then it's an excuse for not bothering at all. So there is danger even in that, but one could say that the more aware and mindful one is and the more spiritually developed one is, the less one needs the help of explicitly formulated rules. I think that to the extent that one is an individual one does not need rules, while to the extent that one is not an individual one

does need rules and therefore rules are necessary for groups.

Prasannasiddhi: Even despite the fact that obeying the rule rather than the spirit of the rule was not sufficient ...

S: Well I think that for groups - people who are merely group members have no awareness as such of principles but they need to observe rules just to make social life possible, for themselves and for those who are individuals.

Kovida: It can also set up the conditions for an awareness of the principles [16] as well.

S: Yes, yes, to some extent.

Prasannasiddhi; Sort of making a rule to have, not, for no one to eat at the dinner table or for everyone to start at the same time at the dinner table. It's a sort of rule but it sort of imposes a sort of standard for people to achieve...

S: Well it's a restraint also.

Prasannasiddhi; It just sort of helps but the natural spirit should be actually to have awareness...

S: Yes, of other people, and feel like doing things together, in harmony. Anyway let's go on to see what Bhaddali says. "So when this had been said by the Buddha, the Venerable Bhaddali spoke thus to the Lord:

I, revered sir, am not capable of eating my food at one session; revered sir, if I ate my food at one session, I might have scruples, I might have misgivings."

So what is he saying? First of all, "I am not capable" (na ussahami?) I am not able or I do not dare; let me see what the dictionary says about that word in case it throws any additional light.

Ussaha is strength, power, energy, endeavour, good will. So it could be just incapable, not capable. I don't know about daring but it could also be translated as not inclined to, not disposed to. I think it means incapable: "I'm not capable of eating my food at one session." The verse said, "If I ate my food at one session I might have scruples" Kukkucca, scrupulous doubting, doubting whether it's good for his health, whether that would you know, he might feel that it's good for him to get up and walk about especially in the course of a meal. Could that be the meaning?

Sthirananda: Well it depends upon his motives. It might be just a healthy scepticism, or maybe something underlying that... he may actually be eating too much or something.

S: Mmm.

Sthirananda: We need to know something about Bhaddali in a way.

S: Mmm, yes, in a way one does. One does not actually... one is not told very much about

him.

Subhuti; Doesn't scruples in English have a connotation of moral doubt?

S: Yes.

Subhuti: It's not just worry, it's worry about whether you are doing [17] the right thing morally.

S: Well this is what the note says "Doubting whether one is doing right."

Subhuti: In the sense of morally right, not just...

S: Mmm, yes, yes.

Subhuti: ...you might (unclear) it might not be healthy.

S: Yes, yes. The note continues according to the commentary: "Bhaddali says he wonders if he could or could not fare the Brahma-faring for the whole of his life if he ate thus". But it then adds: "He had been a crow in a former birth, and because crows are great eaters he had the nickname of Mahachataka: Great Eater". But again that does not seem very relevant because what has that got to do with this not eating at one session?

Subhuti: They've interpreted the whole thing in the light of the eating before noon.

S: Well it could be, have something to do with eating quite a bit and being so full that you have to go and walk around a bit and then come back before you could eat anything more. It could possibly refer to that. Yes. In view of what follows possibly one should understand (unclear) he's just making excuses, he does not actually want to follow the Buddha's advice and he's just making excuses and sort of rationalizing.

Kovida: Could it also be something to do with the fact that he doesn't want to refuse the food as a gift, you know, if the lay people give to the monk then he's expected to take it.

S: But then what connection has that got with not...

Kovida: Well he maybe feels...

S: Whether he eats at one session?

Kovida: Yes, but he maybe feels he couldn't eat all that he's given. It may just be a purely physical thing, but if they're going to give him loads of food he feels partially obliged to take it all. He also knows his own system well enough that he's unable to eat all that will be given which would be some kind of excuse for the scruples.

S: No, there's actually no suggestion in the Pali text that lay people tried to give bhikkhus more than enough. What the bhikkhu usually... what happened was that when the bhikkhus went to people's houses as a result of an invitation they took their bowls with them. They ate from their bowls even in the laymen's houses, and when they'd had enough they just took,



they withdrew their hand from the bowl, that was a sign that no more was to be served. But if they still had their hand in the bowl well that was a sign that they wanted to take a little more. So there was no question I think of people pressing them with more food.

Alaya: Also he says: "I might have scruples, I might have misgivings"...

S: Yes. yes (unclear) convinced ...

[18]

Alaya: It doesn't sound as if he has tried it yet.

S: ...about his own scruples even, yes.

Prasannasiddhi: Could it perhaps be that actually this is not a sort of very strong point of significance in you know a sort of something that has strong emphasis should be placed on it, actually things later on in the sutta are actually sort of points but this is sort of imposed as the reason why that is added to the sutra, is the reason why the Buddha eventually came to making other points sort of leading on from that, it'd just be a sort of minor point of everyday sort of happenings (unclear)

S: On the other hand, the Buddha seems to be taking Bhaddali's refusal quite seriously, as it turns out later.

Prasannasiddhi: Well perhaps, I mean, I don't know, perhaps in a way Bhaddali was a greedy person and he used to eat a lot of food and perhaps the Buddha just sort of ...it was like a quite immediate conversation and the Buddha said 'Well I think monks that we should just have one meal and then just take one sitting'.

S: Yes, but the connection of that with greed is not clear. Even assuming Bhaddali is greedy, assuming the Buddha wants to curb his greed, the bearing on that of eating at one session is not clear.

Prasannasiddhi: Well perhaps if you... the Buddha's sort of implying the mindfulness aspect of ...

S: Implying, but he is actually actively speaking in terms of health and strength.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, which would be contributed if you were mindful or which would stem from being mindful about your meals.

S: But Bhaddali says he has scruples and presumably they are scruples on the grounds of health and strength. Presumably - I mean that is that is being explicitly discussed.

Prasannasiddhi: Is that the way you interpret it? You could also just perhaps say that ... interpret it as Bhaddali being just a bit you know he was a bit worried because he does eat a lot of food and he sort of immediately spoke out that you know he felt that actually he wouldn't be able to do that.

S: But even that isn't true because then the Buddha says: "Well then, you Bhaddali, having

eaten one portion there where you were invited, having taken another portion away, might eat that too. Could you, Bhaddali, eating thus, keep yourself going?" but he still says no, he still says he might have scruples. So it doesn't sound as though he is concerned with the quantity of food he is going to get because the Buddha is allowing him to take away food from the invitation, eat that, but still [19] he is not agreeable.

Alaya: Is it that he has doubts about the whole idea of having training rules at all.

S: It may be that because he's taken severely to task for that later on. It could be that it's simply an expression of Bhaddali's resistance to being told anything by the Buddha at all. From the... I mean, I've read through the sutta, it would seem that that actually is what is at the bottom of it all. That actually there's quite a resistance on Bhaddali's part to accepting, you know, what would seem to be a positive suggestion from the Buddha. He seems to have resistance to as it were being disciplined. Though that is in the light of what follows.

Alaya: It would seem the only reason here with what we've read so far, because he's been given another - there doesn't seem to be any rational reason why he ... not from the amount of food or ... from health.

Prasannasiddhi: One does get the feeling of a little more to it than just the basic connection with food. It does seem there's something else going on...

Subhuti: From a dramatic point of view the rule is so trivial, so minor, so easy to observe, that it highlights Bhaddali's ...

S: Resistance.

Subhuti: Resistance, yes.

S: It's hardly a moral rule, it's more like a rule of etiquette, you know, don't get up in the middle of a meal, finish the meal at one sitting (unclear) but that little thing seems to have sparked off a quite strong resistance on Bhaddali's part. Well, sometimes one finds that, I've noticed that within the context of the Friends, that even quite small things, things that you would accept without any discussion, they give rise to heated arguments and people seem to put up a lot of resistance to them. So once you've seen that, well this seems to be what a going on here, but why should that be?

Subhuti: Is it anything more than what we've said, that people have resistance to doing what they're told (unclear) authority...

S: Well, but sometimes people obey apparently quite willingly, quite cheerfully, something of a more serious nature concerning them, something more difficult, but a little trivial point that one would have thought so easy for them to follow, you know, they're not willing to follow, as here. So why should that be? One has actually seen that happen.

Sthirananda: There's something wrong perhaps with the suggestion itself, there could be something between the people involved, there's so many factors that actually could make a refusal to do it.

S: I think what it is that most people like to feel that they've got some area of freedom, there should be at least in little matters, or [20] apparently little matters they should be left to do what they like, and it's a feeling that even in little matters, they're not being allowed to do what ... even in those matters that provokes the resistance, because in some, ... it may be with regard to more important matters they don't really want to do as they're told but they know they haven't really got a leg to stand on as regards argument, but it's in the little matters, well they're sort of morally neutral, they don't really matter, no they should be free to do what they like there, but the fact that they feel so strongly suggests perhaps that little matters aren't so little as might appear. I can remember endless discussions on very trivial points where no one should really bother whether you do it this way or that way, endless discussions whether certain programmes should start at 2.15 or 2.30, the discussion would go on for an hour or more on that point with arguments pro and con. Whereas one would have thought no one would have bothered sufficiently to want to discuss it but that isn't the case.

Sthirananda: It's like the little matters bring to the surface entrenched attitudes.

S: Yes, that is true, because there is a sort of (unclear) well you know, this doesn't really matter, where people expect to be allowed a bit of leeway there. They feel they've a right to assert their particular feelings and preferences because these are quite trivial matters.

Alaya: Squabbles usually do seem to be about trivial matters by their very nature. So is this the reason?

S: Well I'm not sure but very often quarrels do come to a head in connection with trivial matters.

Alaya: And with a large point then you would have to decide one way or the other, you'd have to commit yourself to a way of action, whereas with a small point you could be procrastinating, just keep on talking about it.

S: Sometimes small points need to be decided too.

Alaya: But there with Bhaddali they're a point of resistance and stubbornness.

Prasannasiddhi: It does imply a level of ... that people are operating on a level of conflict in a way, that they are disagreeing about these things, they are squabbling, they're operating on a level of conflict, rather than being clear-minded and being able to come to decisions on a quite rational basis. As the Buddha... it seems that the Buddha during this section, he's quite clear, you know, and he seems quite rational in his approach to things, quite sensible, whereas Bhaddali seems to be not sensible. It's as if there is something in Bhaddali that is causing him not to be sensible and [21] rational in this situation.

Alaya: (unclear) anyway the Buddha would see that Bhaddali was up to and his second statement is almost kind of slightly humorous.

S: Yes, "Well then, you, Bhaddali, having eaten one portion there where you were invited, having taken another portion away since you couldn't finish it all at one sitting might eat that too. Could you, Bhaddali, eating thus keep yourself going?" It's as though he can't keep himself going either by acting in accordance with that the Buddha has suggested or even not

acting. So it does seem that he is being completely irrational. But then anyway go on now to read the next paragraph, and we'll see what it leads to.

Prasannasiddhi: "Then the venerable Bhaddali, while a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord, while the Order of monks was undertaking the training, made known his inability. Then the venerable Bhaddali did not see the Lord face to face for an entire three months because he was one who did not carry out in full the training under the Teacher's instruction".

S: Yes. Let's see... verse six (unclear)...so, "Then the venerable Bhaddali while a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord" and according to the commentary this was the rule forbidding eating at the wrong time, so we've seen there's some doubt about that. "While the order of monks was undertaking the training, made known his inability". The term for rule of training is sikkhapada. It is significant that really that doesn't involve the term rule at all. Sikkha or sikkha is yes training, the word which corresponds to our education pada is simply a step or factor, an element, it could be translated more as an element in training or a step in training. Rule is ... if you translate using the word rule, then that introduces all the connotations the word rule has in English into the Pali which are not there.

: How do you spell sikkhapada? Dictionary ...

S: Sikkha is study, training discipline. Itto from a verb sikkhati which means to learn, to train oneself. Sikkhapada, the latter in the sense of a code of training, instructions, precept, rule. Pada is the same word as in Dhammapada. (Pause) This is more like a principle, part, constituent, characteristic, ingredient, element. It's much more element of training, or element of learning, element of study, it's much more like that. I think element of training is probably the best.

What page [22] were we on?

Subhuti: 108. So that's what is translated here as rule of training.

S: Yes, yes it would ... element in training would be much more accurate, yes? So the venerable Bhaddali while an element of training was being laid by the Lord, while the Order of monks was undertaking the training, presumably that training, made known his inability. So that just recapitulates what had happened.

Subhuti: It's interesting this bit: 'While the Order of monks was undertaking the training' suggests acceptance by them of the rule laid down, or the training principle.

S: This samadiyami, it's exactly that we say then we recite the precepts, you see. For instance: "Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami", I accept or express my willingness to observe. (Pause).

Subhuti: The way it's expressed here it sounds quite formal, the Buddha sort of enunciates a training principle, the monks all formally undertake to observe it and Bhaddali formally makes known the fact that he is not going to, or can't.

S: "Then the venerable Bhaddali did not see the Lord face to face for an entire three months

because he was one who did not carry out in full the training under the Teacher's instruction". So that do you think that means, what does that imply? He didn't see the Buddha face to face for an entire three months because he was one who did not carry out in full the training under the Teacher's instruction.

Subhuti: You could take it quite formally as if there's a ban on anybody who didn't do what the Buddha said, but perhaps it means more that he was out of communication with the Buddha.

S: Well it could have meant that he was ashamed of himself, on the other hand it could have meant that he experienced some alienation from the Buddha, some estrangement from the Buddha, and therefore as it were didn't come into the Buddha's presence. It can be a further expression of his obstinacy. When it says: "because he was one who would not carry out in full the training", in other words it suggests that if one isn't carrying out the Buddha's training in full then it's difficult to come face to face with him, it's difficult to see him face to face, one would be conscious that it isn't appropriate as it were, you are out of harmony with the Buddha. Well I mean there's a certain ambiguity, it's not clear whether.. first of all it does say "the venerable Bhaddali did not see the Lord face to face for an entire three months" that is the factual statement, then "because he was one who did not, etc.." so it is not clear whether he deliberately didn't go to see the Buddha for three months because he realized he wasn't carrying out the teaching, or [23] whether that part is the explanation of the compiler. Do you see the difference? Do you see the difference between the two?

Alaya: Do you think there is any implication with the face to face that he was still around, but he just didn't have any discussion with him?

S: Well he should have been around because as we see subsequently they were observing the rainy season retreat so he should not have gone away so he must have been around. (Pause).

Prasannasiddhi: It may have been apparent that Bhaddali was avoiding the Buddha, at the time it may have been quite apparent that he hadn't ... there's a sort of ... you could see maybe a tenseness in Bhaddali.

Kovida: Is it idiomatic, face to face, eye to eye, or is that ...

S: It is .. face to face is quite idiomatic.

Kovida: I was wondering if the translation was ...

S: Yes, it's not only literal but it is a sort of idiom. (Unclear) (samuki pavan?) ... it's (unclear) face to face.

[24]

Subhuti: From what comes afterwards there is a definite suggestion that Bhaddali has been holding back, as it were, so that the former of the two possibilities would seem to be the most likely.

Alaya: Would there have been a formal time when the Buddha would have spoken with people, would have seen people?

S O, yes. Very likely. There were the full moon days and half moon days.

Alaya: He just would be walking around and other monks would come up to him and talk to him?

S Sometimes that would happen.

Alaya: Because it would be quite hard if they were all in one area, a small area, for three months together. It would be quite difficult to avoid face to face contact; you would have to deliberately avoid it.

S: Though it's clear that Bhaddali, as it were, avoided the Buddha because he was conscious that he wasn't completely following the Buddha's instructions. (Pause) Would someone like to read the next two paragraphs, beginning with "Now".

Kovida: Now at that time a number of monks were making up robe-material for the Lord, and they said: "When the Lord's robe material is settled, he will set out on a three months tour" Then the venerable Bhaddali approached these monks; having approached, he exchanged greetings with these monks; having conversed in a friendly and courteous way, he sat down at a respectful distance. These monks spoke thus to the venerable Bhaddali as he was sitting down at a respectful distance:

"Reverend Bhaddali, this robe-material in being made up for the Lord. When the robe-material is settled, the Lord will set out on a three months tour. Please, reverend Bhaddali pay careful attention to this opportunity, lest later it is more difficult for you."

S: Yes, usually, you know, robes were made up in the course of, or towards the end of the rainy season retreat, so that the monks could go off on their wanderings again in a new set of robes; so it isn't actually said that they were all observing the rainy [25] season retreat on this occasion but that seems to be the implication in as much as that was usually the time when new robes were made. So it's interesting it says he will set out on a three months tour. (pause) So when the Lord's robe-material is settled presumably when the robes are made up - he will set out on a three months tour. "Then the venerable Bhaddali approached these monks; having approached, he exchanged greetings with these monks; having conversed in a friendly and courteous way, he sat down at a respectful distance ..." These are all standard formulas. "These monks spoke thus to the venerable Bhaddali as he was sitting down at a respectful distance:

"Reverend Bhaddali, this robe-material is being made up for the Lord. When the robe-material is settled, the Lord will set out on a three months tour. Please, reverend Bhaddali, pay careful attention to this opportunity, lest later it is more difficult for you." So what's happening here?

Sthirananda: He's being given friendly advice.

S: He's being given friendly advice. The monks, the other monks, apparently know that Bhaddali has been avoiding the Buddha, that there is a sort of estrangement on his part from the Buddha. So they are advising him that there is only a short time left, that when the robes

are made up the Buddha is going to leave, he's going to be away for three months. So they're advising Bhaddali to pay careful attention to this opportunity; and then they say, "Lest later it is more difficult for you." I mean, why should it be more difficult later?

Sthirananda: Attitudes become hardened.

S: Attitudes become hardened, yes. I mean, the longer an estrangement continues the more difficult it is to resolve. The longer misunderstandings persist the more difficult they are to resolve; they become, as it were, confirmed into permanent attitudes, even habits. So the monks realize that and this is why they give Bhaddali the advice that they do.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think that is the actual reason, rather than just, it could be harder for Bhaddali because he'll be ... the Buddha will be going off shortly; it could just be that.

S: It may be that, that's an additional factor. I think the psychological one is probably the main one. (pause) I mean, he doesn't know, he may die in the mean time, the Buddha may die. He doesn't know.

[26]

Prasannasiddhi: I mean would the monks be liable to say to Bhaddali, "it will be harder for you later", because attitudes are hardened. I mean would they actually be likely to say that to another monk?

S: Oh yes, I think so. Yes. I think they were quite well aware of these sort of psychological possibilities.

Prasannasiddhi: But would you think they would actually mention that to Bhaddali face to face; and could that make Bhaddali react a bit.

S: Well it does say that they've had a friendly conversation, you see. I mean this is perhaps significant; that he approaches them, and then he exchanges greeting with them. And you notice it's a bit unusual, all this goes on apparently while he's still standing up - and only after... which is a bit unusual because, you see, the monks are making up robe-material therefore, presumably, sitting down to do that. Bhaddali comes along and he exchanges greetings with them, he engages in friendly and courteous conversation, and only then he sits down with them; which is in a way quite unusual because it is generally considered impolite if one party is standing and the other is seated when they are conversing. So it is as though, to begin with, Bhaddali wasn't quite sure of his welcome, you see what I mean? And only when he was a bit reassured he sat down, and at a respectful distance, and then they spoke to him. So perhaps they understood from that what he was trying to, as it were, find his way back. I mean his whole behaviour suggests a little uncertainty on his part, so his whole behaviour suggests that he might be amenable to some advice from them, so that this is why they give him the advice. They see or they feel that he has become more receptive than he was, at least to them.

Prasannasiddhi: So when they say "Pay careful attention to this opportunity" what would they be referring to?

S: Well the opportunity of the Buddha still being around.

Prasannasiddhi: I see.

S: He hasn't yet gone off on his tour; he's still available, he's still accessible, so there's an opportunity for Bhaddali to clear things up, so he shouldn't miss this opportunity. Later on it may be too difficult for him to get the opportunity, it may be difficult for him to clear things up. So when they say, "Reverend Bhaddali this robe material is being made up for the Lord. When the robe material is settled, the Lord will set out on a three months tour. Please reverend Bhaddali, pay careful attention to this opportunity, lest later it is more difficult for you" at [27] least you've got the opportunity to see the Buddha, if you want to that is. Later on you ... may not have the opportunity; you may not even feel like going to see the Buddha, because your attitude will have become hardened; so take advantage of your opportunity now. All right, read the next two paragraphs.

Alaya: "Yes, your reverences," and the venerable Bhaddali, having answered these monks in assent, approached the Lord; having approached, having greeted the Lord, he sat down at a respectful distance. As he was sitting down at a respectful distance, the venerable Bhaddali spoke thus to the Lord:

"Reverend sir, a transgression has overcome me, foolish, misguided and wrong that I was, inasmuch as I made known an inability when a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord and when the Order of monks was undertaking the training. Reverend sir, may the Lord acknowledge the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future."

S: Mmm... I'm just looking at the Pali text. (long pause) So it does seem as though a lot has been happening below the surface, as it were. We're not told anything about Bhaddali's reflection, you know, during the interval, or anything of that sort; but he immediately acts upon the advice given by those monks. He's going to apparently go straight to the Buddha, and he says, "Revered Sir, a transgression has overcome me, foolish, misguided and wrong that I was..." The word for 'wrong' is Akusala, in the original, unskilful. "In as much as I made known an inability when a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord and when the Order of monks was undertaking the training..." Clearly the word 'inability' is not being used literally, you see, if he was unable, well, he was unable; but he wasn't so much unable as unwilling. So, "Reverend sir, may the Lord acknowledge the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future." This is a stock sort of formula. I mean, maybe he's asking the Buddha to acknowledge that he's recognizing his transgression as a transgression and that he's promising to do better in the future.

Prasannasiddhi: "I made known an inability..." that seems a rather funny way of putting it.

S: Well, one must remember it's a translation, and that English idiom doesn't always correspond to the Pali idiom. (pause) 'I expressed my inability', he might say.

Subhuti: On the face of it that's not a transgression then is it.

S: What isn't?

[28]

Subhuti: To make known an inability.



S: If the inability was a real inability then it can't be a transgression, but it was a transgression because it wasn't an honest inability.

Subhuti: In a way he doesn't actually make plain what his transgression was, unless the Pali is less ...

Kovida: Surely his inability refers to the fact that he was unable to eat at one sitting, which he expressed earlier. I mean, that's what he's referring to. He expressed his inability to do that at the time, and presumably

S: It's not an honest inability but it's an unwillingness, or a reluctance to accept the Buddha's teaching.

Subhuti: He hasn't really made that known; I mean he hasn't really admitted that.

S: Well it does seem as though in the Buddha's day perhaps people weren't psychologically so explicit; it was sort of understood.

Kovida: It seems quite clear from what follows that everyone knew what was going on.

S: It's as though he should have added, 'In as much as I made known an inability when a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord and when the Order of monks was undertaking the training,' it's as though he should have added, well, 'Even though there was no question of an inability. That seems to be implied.

Sthirananda I think there's also the point about the formality of the writing, the actual spirit of things is not necessarily communicated.

S: Yes.

Kovida: Was your point that it's not really a confession of fault if he didn't actually confess the fault. Is that what you were getting at

S: Unless he explicitly; he hasn't explicitly confessed it; though it seems to be understood, it seems quite clear, even so.

Subhuti: In a sense, if you have a genuine inability to ...

S: Then it isn't a transgression.

Subhuti: Then it can't be a transgression.

S: But the original expression of an inability was not a genuine, honest expression of an inability. Or maybe with the word inability which means the note says "I'm not able or I do not dare" doesn't have that literal meaning of inability that it has in English. It could be translated as I don't have the inclination or, yes, I didn't feel like it.

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Kovida: Disinclined.

S: Disinclined, yes. "That in as much as I made known a 'disinclination" Well, that would be a transgression: disinclined to observe that training precept.

Prasannasiddhi: It's as if 'I made known an inability' should somehow be rewritten in another fashion to communicate that he ...

S: Lack of willingness rather than literal inability.

Subhuti: Is this a formula. Does it occur anywhere else?

S: I don't think so. Though I won't be certain of that; it doesn't occur in (unclear). One could translate it; "I, revered sir, am not capable of ... I don't feel like eating my food at one session."

Prasannasiddhi: Though that might not express the actual sort of situation as it occurs because maybe Bhaddali was a bit reactive at the situation and he sort of says: 'Oh, no I can't, I can't do that.'

S: That is the literal meaning of the word, or the primary meaning of the word, though it can mean 'not willing', 'disinclined'. But if you take the English translation fairly literally his confession is not a true confession.

Subhuti: As it stands the whole thing is so dreadfully formal and stiff. It sounds ... he just makes a stock confession.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: There's no allusion to what's really been happening, to his own resistance.

S: Well one often finds that in the Pali texts, you know, falling back on stock phraseology; presumably because it was easier. Because all these texts are translated by oral means, originally for hundreds of years together. So I think there was a tendency, or there seems to have been a tendency in many cases, to rely more and more on stock phraseology, standard phraseology, stock expressions and so on; even whole passages together, wherever one could. (pause) Then the Buddha says: "Indeed, Bhaddali, a transgression overcame you, foolish, misguided and wrong that you were, inasmuch as while a rule of training was being laid down by me and while the training was being undertaken by the Order of monks, you made known your inability." So clearly the word 'inability' is not being used in the literal sense. If *ussahami* does mean "I am unable" which it seems to be. It's better (to have) unwillingness rather than inability. (Tea Break)

[30]

Prasannasiddhi: I was thinking about this, people often mention about the Pali canon, how they find it dry or intellectual. I think it is quite true to an extent actually.

S: Well it depends what part of it you read because the Jataka stories are part of the Pali canon and they're quite entertaining. In fact quite humorous very often; there's three thick volumes of those, five hundred stories or so, though strictly speaking these stories are not part of the canon proper, only the verses are.

Prasannasiddhi: I was thinking of novels, and well, poetry as well, and it seems that things are presented as much more kind of pleasing in a way, sort of in a more stimulating fashion.

S: Well again one has to remember that in the Pali texts there was a writing down of material which was orally transmitted, so if one is trying to transmit material orally one tends to rely upon repetitions and definite structures and all that sort of thing which are not very pleasing when it comes to reading what has been written down. It could be that some of the Mahayana sutras are more pleasing in a way because they don't really represent the writing down of an oral tradition, they represent the composition of a text based upon certain teachings or even oral traditions but the sutra in that form has not been handed down orally, it's not a simple dissension of an oral tradition whereas the Pali texts are, to a great extent. So they don't make attractive reading, they weren't intended to be read, they represent an oral tradition, which only subsequently was written down.

Prasannasiddhi: Even orally the same thing will apply, orally as well as written down.

S: What will apply,

Prasannasiddhi: Well the fact that it is still a bit dry.

S: Yes, that's what I'm saying. One of the reasons why it's dry, if not the main reason, was it was orally transmitted and the fact that you're transmitting something orally imposes certain conventions to make the process of oral transmission easier, like repetitions. That makes the whole thing easier to remember for those transmitting them.

Subhuti: For instance there's the Iliad and the Odyssey orally transmitted in those forms. I mean there was a version written down around the [31] time of Socrates.

Kovida: There's still lots of repetition and stock phrases in that as well.

Subhuti: Yes, but they don't have the same ... they don't formalize it so much do they; in fact they're sort of rather pleasing.

S: Well there are traces of oral traditions, but I think the writing down was much nearer to the original composition; and also it was a story; that in fact makes a difference. A story gives unity to a text. It was a question of one continuous story. We do know for instance in some parts of the Pali canon there are suttas which quite clearly have been manufactured on the basis of other suttas and to include an additional item. There was a sort of stock pattern for a sutta. The fact is that the Pali Canon does vary quite a bit. It's not all equally dry, some parts are not dry at all. It certainly has that reputation. It requires a certain amount of serious study which a lot of people are not prepared to do; they want something which is a bit readable, a bit entertaining, at the same time; which is fair enough; but if one is a serious student one should be able to do without these things.

Prasannasiddhi: Have you ever given thought to maybe ...whether the possibilities of retranslating it or whether it was even worthwhile to do such a thing.

S: I don't know whether it was worthwhile, I think it's better to do it as at were orally, that's to say ( unclear ). For instance in these talks that I'm giving (unclear) I can take an incident from

the Pali Canon; I just try to bring it more to life and bring out the implications of it. I think it's probably better to do it in that sort of way. Well I mean the traditional sermon in church does that doesn't it. It gets taken from the bible, stories from the Bible: expanding them, elaborating them, bringing out the significance; that always has to be done anyway it seems, unless the text concerned is a work of art which doesn't require that treatment.

Prasannasiddhi: You don't think the practicalities of making the Pali Canon a work of art ...

S: I don't, I think it's hardly possible. Unless you just sort of re-organize it and rewrite it completely. But then it would only be accepted either on your personal authority or on the actual merits of what you've produced. I mean for instance Ambedkar has produced 'The Buddha and his Dhamma', he's tried to sort of do that sort of thing. He's even quite aware of the need for it to be in good literary style, but I think his English is terrible, it's very, very bad; it's far worse than this. [32] (unclear). He's rewritten certain things but it's difficult to tell where his rewriting ends and the actual translation or, you know, version of the translation begins. So, you know, what sort of status has a volume of that kind? That is the question.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, what sort of status had the perfection of wisdom sutras, when there were no original ... ?

S: They were accepted as the word of the Buddha. Now we know that they can't be regarded as the word of the Buddha literally; in the sense that the Buddha didn't utter every single word, but when they were put into circulation people believed, or at least Mahayanists believed, that these were actually the words of the Buddha.

Prasannasiddhi: Really?

S: O yes! And believed that for hundreds of years. O yes! They were Sutras. They didn't have the modern critical attitude you see. So suppose one does produce a volume of the re-edited Pali texts rearranged, well, what is the status of that? I mean who would take it as a sort of serious basis for a study of Buddhism? It would fall between two stools. You know, people wouldn't read it as a novel, that is a novelistic reconstruction; on the other hand they couldn't take it as a reliable source book. In a way Ambedkar book is a bit in that sort of category.

Prasannasiddhi: But in a way modern people know that the Perfection of Wisdom aren't the actual word of the Buddha but yet they still consider them worthwhile studying.

S: Well how many people do study, study seriously in the modern west? Only a few. (unclear) I can think of works, for instance a work like Mrs Adams Beck's 'Life of The Buddha'. Well she's retold the story of the Buddha's life in an imaginative sort of way; but I mean, yes, it's very readable, it's just the life of the Buddha; but you can't quote from that if you want to illustrate something from Buddhism, or even from the life of the Buddha, because there's so much that's imaginative. It gives a very pleasing impression but no more than that. It can't be regarded as a guide to the life of the Buddha.

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Prasannasiddhi: That may depend on the actual person who is doing the work, whether he or she has a knowledge, any real feeling.

S: I don't think it depends so much on knowledge. It depends more on Authority. For instance among Ambedkar's followers, they accepted his book "The Buddha and His Dharma" as just Buddhism. What he says is Buddhism, well that is Buddhism. But actually he has made quite a few mistakes one could say. There are some things that one cannot accept, there are things that he has misunderstood. But though it is going to be quite difficult to correct those errors because for his followers his book has that authority, because it is His book. Even I have to be quite careful in what I say in this respect, amongst them disagreeing with anything that he said in his book. There are some things that he clearly hasn't grasped.

So in a way one cannot do this any more you cannot do it if you are known to do it. I mean it was quite possible, say in the days of the rise of the Mahayana Sutras for someone to quietly put into circulation a Sutra which everybody would accept, "oh yes, that is the word of the Buddha", but you cannot do that now. Some people try to do it, even now. You know, they discover something or feel inspired by some Master, and you know they try and put up something which can be regarded as authoritative, but usually only a small circle of people accept this. If you put it forward actually as a reconstruction, well, they say it is just a reconstruction, it is your idea, so they won't take it very seriously.

Prassanasiddhi: So it would depend on just what you were able to create in a way, such as the Cathars in the South of France, when they were beginning, they may not have had much material, they would have had to create their own things and it may be that as the years went by more and more people felt that what one or two people had created was...

S: But then the situation is different nowadays, because you could write your book, but then the Pali Scriptures would still be there. I mean if you could abolish the Pali Scriptures and write your book, well that would be a different matter, but you cannot do that. So it could be that people just get a little confused, "what is the authoritative source?". It isn't easy any more. So that is why we have to make do as best we can with what we have got and maybe re-create to some extent from time to time, especially through lectures or just particular little incidents, I don't think you can sort of re-cast the whole Pali Scriptures and then sort of present that as the sort of Bible of Buddhism, as in fact Ambedkar tried to do.

Prassanasiddhi: But perhaps he wasn't quite so clear on Buddhism, so he wasn't capable of doing the job necessary. I mean if people have been able to produce such things as the Perfection of Wisdom texts, if they can do that once, well someone can do that again in a way...

S: But the conditions were different then, I mean it is not just a question of production, it is a question of putting into circulation and acceptance.

Subhuti: It could never have more of a status than a Sastra. It could never be a Scripture, no scriptures can again be produced again, by definition can they?

[34]

S: right, yes.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, I mean, you get instances like Asanga going up to ... they are not quite sure how he got hold of his texts, and the Yogacara, the Lankavatara ...

S: But even his texts were accepted as Sastras, not as Sutras. In other words for historical reasons you cannot dislodge from the position that they have occupied for so many hundreds if not thousands of years the texts that we actually have. So maybe they remain in the background, and you bring your own expositions to the fore, but you cannot as it were discard those texts which have been recognized for so long. It depends on authority, in the case of Ambedkar, people have got absolutely blind faith in him, so they accept whatever he put out and that creates a quite difficult situation, because his understanding of Buddhism as such was limited. But his volume has got great prestige among his own followers, who are not really in a position to judge at all.

Subhuti: I suppose in a way it is a matter of a technical definition of a Scripture. For instance within the FWBO probably most people have read the Survey, and they would accept that as authoritative against probably most other sources. So in a sense you could say that for the FWBO that is a kind of Scripture.

S: No, only at best a Sastra.

Subhuti: I'm not using the terms, ... I am deliberately using the terms quite loosely, because it has the same status within the FWBO of being an authoritative book, if you like.

S: Yes, but because it is regarded as an authoritative exposition of Buddhism, of the Buddha's Teaching. I have at least read all the things that people don't have time to read.

Subhuti: But it does, there seems to be a sort of point in what Prassanasiddhi is saying which is that, I would say, even though no more scriptures can ever be created by definition, because of the higher criticism that can be brought to bear on Buddhist literary material, new works can achieve that same authoritative status.

S: In a way they can, but they won't take the place of scriptures in the sense that, they won't be books that you go to read what the Buddha actually said or what you believe the Buddha actually said. It would be definitely exposition. I mean this is what is happening in the case of the Gelugpas in Tibet, most Tibetan Gelugpa monks, they don't read the Sutras even, they read the works of Tsongkapa . So far as they are concerned Tsongkapa has read all the texts, and he expounds the correct meaning of the texts. But he didn't sort of edit the Sutras for them to read. The Sutras remained unchanged. But yes you could certainly write an authoritative exposition of the Buddha's Teachings, which would have a sort of canonical status. This could be certainly be done, and has happened in many Buddhist countries. I mean for the Theravadins, the Vissudi Magga is of that kind.

Prassanasiddhi: I was thinking more in terms of sort of recasting the Pali Scriptures, or parts of them, in such a way that they [35] could be read, just as readings and so forth, and they would be just that much more sort of interesting.

S: Well you could do that with a few texts, but you could hardly do that wholesale with the whole Canon, and expect that version of yours to take the place of what has come down to us; I think that that would hardly be possible.

Sthirananda: It seems that the way the Pali Canon is written is in a way valid for it to remain like that, but that what is required is - one could go into depth into the Sutras, through say

lectures and give it some kind of life and even meaning. That perhaps in a literary way what is needed is a commentary that actually does a similar sort of thing. It seems that the commentary in these sorts of things is just not able to do that.

S: The unfortunate situation is that the(...) you actually have which is your sort of authoritative work is not very inspiring as literature, this is the difficulty. Now again this may to some extent depend upon tradition and conditions even. Because the Muslims they stoutly maintain that Koran is the supreme work of literature, that it's language and it's poetry is supreme. They really believe this, and they seem to experience it in this way. If we read a translation of the Koran, it appears to be a hopeless jumble. In fact most people are really surprised when they start reading the Koran, they find it unreadable in fact. But this is not how a Muslim sees it.

Kovida: It is interesting that The Christians have managed to re-write the Bible several times, I think, there is the New English Version, there is also an Americanised Version, called "Good News for Modern Man".

S: that is just a translation, maybe a more accurate, more contemporary translation, that is a different thing.

Kovida: But surely it is circulated and used.

S: But Prasannasiddhi was thinking of a complete re-writing as it were

Subhuti: You couldn't re-translate this in a more acceptable way?

S: Well, it depends again what does one mean by translate?

Subhuti: Well you could presumably make it more accessible and more accurate...

S: I think it could be more adequately translated, but I think there are limits, there are definite limits on account of the very nature of the original. I don't think it can be made very attractive in English or much of it can be made very attractive in English, because it isn't really very attractive even in the original, in certain respects.

Sthirananda: But surely in a way criticism in its real sense, like art criticism, actually makes accessible...

S: Well there is a difference, because with art criticism, you have [36] got a work of Art to start with, but here you have not got a work of Art.

Sthirananda: But surely there is, perhaps not a work of Art, but something that is actually useful to communicate or to clear up, to make clear.

S: No, I think what Prassanasiddhi was getting at was that, it is not only a question of the Teaching, but the attractive literary form, but that is difficult to get with regard...  
(interruption) A commentary just explains the meaning or clarifies the meaning.

Sthirananda: But I think in some cases a commentary can actually be quite interesting.

S: Oh yes, but that is another matter. Some commentaries are not at all interesting. You cannot produce a work which recasts the whole of the Buddha's life and Teaching in such a way that it is much more attractive and easy to read and doesn't lose anything, and at the same time can occupy the place that theoretically the Pali Canon occupies, I don't think that that is possible, for historical reasons as it were.

Prassanasiddhi: I just feel that if it was... you take a section or a Sutra and you find it has got these repetitions and these kind of dot, dot, dots, and it is not ... I just feel it could be put a lot more...

S: Well, it could be, but it is not just a question of just putting it, this is the whole point I am making, it is a question of acceptance by other people. I mean, a lot of people feel this is actually what was handed down for hundreds of years, and is quite close to what the Buddha said. Supposing I was to re-cast, I might make a beautiful job of it, but they would just say that is Sangharakshita re-casting, it is two thousand five hundred years later.

Prassanasiddhi: On the other hand, within the FWBO people may take that recast version, they may read it because they know you personally, they respect and admire your work...

S: Yes, they might, but what about outside? So you would have the FWBO with its own Buddhist scriptures, you see what I mean?

Prassanasiddhi: Well maybe the FWBO will grow.

S: Well you might say it is simpler rather than to rewrite the Pali Canon it would be simpler to write a new scripture (laughing).

Prassanasiddhi: Because there is a lot there...

S: I think it would be very difficult to weave in all the teachings and traditions that have come down to us into a sort of organic whole, which was at the same time a literary sort of masterpiece, or at least sufficiently a masterpiece to be really appealing. I think that would be quite difficult. I wouldn't say it is impossible.

Alaya: Dramatizing some of it would be a good way of doing it.

S: Also of course there is the fact that things are old, the fact that they are old tends to inspire people and attract quite a lot of faith, which doesn't happen when something is newly produced especially by someone you know.

[37]

Sthirananda: Getting back to the idea of the commentary, is it that there is a necessity for a decent commentary for something like this, I am talking about an actual book.

S: Ideally in the future, in the FWBO we might have people, Order Members, who are good Pali Scholars. All right they make a new translation of a Sutra or a collection of Sutras, and in making that translation they bear in mind what they have learned from their practice, their own understanding of the Teaching, and perhaps they add a commentary, based to some extent on the sort of seminars that we have been having, and maybe that other people have



been having over the years to bring out the full meaning, this would certainly be possible. This is quite traditional in fact. But if you have just got a translator of the text, no one is really bothered much about what it really means. So I must say that the Buddhist Publication Society in Colombo, they have done a bit of work of this kind with some Pali texts. I mean some bhikkhus even have brought out translations of Pali texts with detailed commentary and introduction, all that is quite good, in principle, the only difficulty is that they don't usually go far enough or give a sufficiently deep or comprehensive explanation. But they have tried to do something like that. So there is certainly precedent. It wouldn't be anything untraditional about it at all.

Kovida: The best way would surely be to have, like this seminar is recorded, is to have the Pali text, the English translation, and then the Seminar in the same volume, so you could study .

S: Or better still say a commentary based on the Seminar because a seminar like that is a bit rough and ready as it were and just wanders a bit. That material needs to be re-cast, that could be done, and embodied in a decent commentary, which would give people a clearer understanding of the original text. It would be better if the text could be re-cast in such a way that a commentary was not necessary, but I doubt whether that is actually possible.

Sthirananda: So this way commentary and translation are very much together.

S: Yes, I think at present that is the case. It would be quite good to do what in fact I said the Buddhist Publication Society has done, bring out sutras in good translations, or better translations with proper introductions, commentaries, proper notes, so that one gets a quite comprehensive and quite deep understanding of the whole thing. But just to have a hundred and fifty suttas just baldly translated and just the odd note on a technical term and no real explanation is not very helpful for most people.

Subhuti: It is quite interesting going over it now with you, having gone over it in study on the Order week-end. We didn't finish it, but a lot of things have come out which we just didn't know about, for instance, I didn't know about the ... I thought the partaking of food at one session was what... the partaking of food at the wrong time, because I followed the note at the bottom of the page

S: Because you didn't feel sufficiently sure within yourself to disagree with the commentary; whereas I am perhaps not so reluctant to disagree with the commentary.

Subhuti: Also this thing about him standing up and talking to [38] the monks, it seems quite important this, it seems to suggest the whole atmosphere, and little things like that we just didn't see...

S: I was able to make that observation because I knew from my experience of Buddhist life in the East that it is not customary that one party should be standing and the other to be seated while a conversation is going on, this is not polite. You should either all be standing or all be seated. So that did suggest diffidence on the part of Bhaddali.

Alaya: It seems that a knowledge of the custom is important.

S: It does help. Though you could have probably have discovered it in the Vinaya if you had combed through.

Subhuti: I think sometimes we got good points out of a misreading of the text.

S: (laughing) But again that is traditional !

It is nearly time, shall we wind up what we have done in the last couple of paragraphs.  
(continues straight on to next page]

[39]

S: "Revered Sir, May the Lord acknowledge the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future" It means for the sake of my restraint in the future.

Subhuti: What about him asking the Buddha to acknowledge his transgression? That seems ...

S: Usually because it's considered important that one should acknowledge one's own transgression as a transgression. But it is, as it were, there is a confusion to be cleared up between him and the Buddha because; I mean, the situation was that he had refused to accept the Buddha's instruction. So now he wants the Buddha to recognize that he has in fact, he is in fact admitting that he made a mistake, that he committed a transgression. So he is asking the Buddha to accept this. (Pause)

Prasannasiddhi: So what he's asking the Buddha to accept his admittance?

S: Yes. This is really what it amounts to. He is asking the Buddha - he's wanting the Buddha to recognize the fact, that he, Bhaddali, has seen his transgression as transgression. He wants the Buddha to acknowledge that so that he knows, he Bhaddali, knows, that the Buddha has understood, you know, the situation and that there is, in fact, now, no disharmony between them. (Pause) And the Buddha does that. (Pause) It's as though, perhaps, Bhaddali wants to make quite sure that there's no misunderstanding and no disharmony. And wants the Buddha to actually say that, yes, I accept that you have recognized your mistake.

Subhuti: It's also the light of his, the whole context of his intransigence is like a receptivity in the Buddha. This represents a reversal of that, doesn't it? Because he's actually concerned about ...

S: That the Buddha should really know that he has had a change of heart. (Long pause)

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Prasannasiddhi: It's that he's bringing it all out into the open, in a way, so that he can be certain that there are no doubts about what's going on. (Pause)

S: That it's all made fully explicit.

Prasannasiddhi: It's not leaving anything to chance.

Subhuti: It seems to be quite an important element in confession. For instance in the Confession section of the Puja - the words escape me at the moment, but you do ... 'may the

leaders accept this'

Kovida: 'Such as it is with its many faults, what is not good O Protectors I shall not do again.'

S: It's as though you need to be sure that you have actually been, as it were, forgiven.

Kovida: Forgiven?

S: Mmm?

Kovida: Forgiven?

S: Yes. I said as it were forgiven. (Laughter)

Kovida: My Catholic boundaries' (Laughter)

S: I mean, if your offence has been committed against somebody, as Bhaddali's was against the Buddha, well, it's not enough that you confess your faults, you need to know, or to be assured, that that person knows that you have realized that your fault was a fault - otherwise you'll be at cross-purposes. The other person may still be thinking that you are of that ... or you may not be even sure whether he knows you have had a change of heart or not. So there'll be some uncertainty in your communication.

Subhuti: Actually that's quite common, isn't it. If you have got a bit out of communication with somebody, sometimes you go to them and say what had happened on your part and you want them to acknowledge it. You want them to, get them to acknowledge it. And until that's happened you can't feel the communication has been re-established. I had an example of this myself quite recently. Somebody sort of, just wouldn't respond - come back ...

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S: It's as though they are harbouring a grudge still on account of that original misconduct, even though you were the one who was at fault, and even though you've as it were confessed that, they still harbour some grudge almost. Or at least a misunderstanding, which is, which is getting in the way, perhaps as much as the original fault which you have now confessed. So things aren't all clear and open and friendly. So you have to ask someone, 'well, do you accept this? Do you accept that I have recognized that I have made a mistake?' If they are unable to do that it means that whatever mistake you have originally committed, is still upsetting them. So there is still something unclear between you. (Pause)

Prasannasiddhi: It's not so much a forgiveness on the Buddha's part. I think it's more just an acknowledgement.

S: Though of course, the question of forgiveness may also enter into it. If you have committed some serious offence against the other person, and they can't really forgive you unless they really do feel that you've realized your fault and you have confessed that. Because forgiveness implies that. So, in a sense, you're asking, want to know you have been forgiven. Because forgiveness means you can, as it were, start afresh. There is nothing held over from the past. (Pause) As you know, within the Theravada tradition, when the disciple confesses, makes his confession of faults to the teacher, the teacher does say 'Kamame Kameme' - I forgive. I

forgive.' (Pause)

Subhuti: This is quite important, to completely clear the whole incident, close it off.

S: Whereas if you say 'Well, I'm sorry I made a mistake. It was my fault' the other person says, 'All right, all right, Oh, let's forget about it then.' It isn't really a very satisfactory conclusion.

Subhuti: You actually go away feeling, well, quite frustrated because you can't, you can't get rid of it then.

S: Well it means the original communication has not been re-established. I mean, you've said your piece but then, you don't know, whether any repercussions from your original mistake aren't continuing. You don't know that unless the other person tells you so. 'It's all right. I understand and I accept that you are sorry for what you did and I forgive you' if forgiveness is necessary. If he says 'OK, OK It's all right, don't worry about it.' Well it's not sufficient.

[42]

Subhuti: I think there's actually a bit of a common miccha-ditthi connected with this. I think. what I find is I tend to feel that it's neurotic on my part that I want to be forgiven. And also people, sort of, well they tend to think of that whole ...

S: Well again it depends on what one means by forgiveness. Or what one implies by forgiveness. It could be neurotic. You may want assurance of someone's continued affection in a neurotic sort of way, but on the other hand, if the original communication is to be restored both parties must say or do something to make it clear that the original communication is restored. Because a breach is a breach between two people. So it's not enough for you to say that you're sorry - the other person must accept and show that he accepts that you're sorry, before the original communication can be fully restored. And it must be really wholehearted, it must convey to you what it ought to convey. Otherwise someone can sort of, speak the right words but so sort of indifferently, or casually or coldly even, that you feel, well, that they haven't really accepted it.

Prasannasiddhi: And that can also be the case of, sort of, saying 'All right don't worry about it' as if the person hasn't really quite looked at it, and said, 'Yes, OK. I do forgive you'. It's as if he's just, sort of, he in a way, he hasn't fully accepted it, unless he turned his attention to it.

S: Maybe he's still feeling very annoyed by what you originally did even though you have admitted a mistake. He's not prepared to Forgive you. Something still rankles.

Alaya: Maybe often they don't want to forgive you. They need - and you've underlined it by apologising - therefore you've taken away their say or whatever.

S: Yes. Taken the wind out of their sails. You've put yourself back in the right as it were. (Laughter) They want you to be in the wrong, perhaps.

Prasannasiddhi: It's sort of, energy, sort of tied up. You know, when you feel someone's done something wrong, and you harbour some resentment towards them. Well, it sort of can be

energy tied up. You just allow yourself to continually - to bare that grudge.

S: If someone makes a mistake and admits it, well you should be very happy. If you really feel happy the natural thing is to express that and say, "Well I'm really glad that you've changed your mind about that" or whatever it is.

(Supper Break)

[43]

"At that time this was not realized by you, Bhaddali: The Lord is staying near Savatthi and the Lord will know of me that the monk named Bhaddali is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction. At that time this was not realized by you, Bhaddali. Nor at that time was this realized by you, Bhaddali: A number of monks who have come to Savatthi for the Rains will also know of me that the monk named Bhaddali is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction. At that time this was not realized by you either Bhaddali. Nor at that time was this realized by you, Bhaddali: a number of nuns who have come to Savatthi for the Rains will also know of me... A number of lay-followers who are living in Savatthi will also know of me that the monk named Bhaddali is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction. At that time this was not realized by you either Bhaddali. Nor at that time was this realized by you Bhaddali: A number of recluses and Brahmins belonging to other sects who have come to Savatthi for the Rains will also know of me that the monk named Bhaddali, a disciple of the recluse Gotama is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction. At that time this was not realized by you either, Bhaddali."

S: So what is the Buddha really saying here? What is the point of these comments?

Sthirananda: That his actions had implications.

S: That means that Bhaddali didn't realize the implications of his own actions. What were those implications and what was the significance of them?

Subhuti: They seem to be different in the case of each section of people. The text itself doesn't say that; presumably as regards the Buddha it alienated him from the Buddha, presumably the same went for the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. Perhaps for the lay-followers, I suppose he wasn't an adequate example.

S: Well one could say that of everybody really, apart from the Buddha himself. I mean even with regards to the followers, the recluses and Brahmins belonging to other sects, if they came to know of this Bhaddali, who is supposed to be a follower of the Buddha, who is not only a bhikkhu, a farer, but he is not completely following the Buddha's instructions. Well what impression of the Order, so to speak, would that give them ? It would give them an impression of almost disunity in the Order.

I mean at the beginning it says " At that time this was not realized by you, Bhaddali: The Lord is staying near Savatthi and the Lord will know of me that the monk named Bhaddali is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction" - what does that really suggest, or what does that really imply ? It is almost as though Bhaddali didn't care what the Buddha thought of him. He didn't realize that the Buddha would be bearing him in mind, or

thinking of him, or remembering him as someone who didn't carry out his teaching in full. So in a sense what could be worse than that?

Alaya: But wasn't he aware that this was why he was alienated from the Buddha?

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S: Well he wasn't really aware of it, apparently, as he said, "At that time, this was not realized by you", let's see what the word 'realized' is. One could say, 'not penetrated, not comprehended, not attained, not understood, no insight into' Not realized is probably adequate, He didn't really know, it is more like that. Of course he did know that the Buddha was staying near Savatthi, but he didn't sort of realize it, he didn't understand the full implications of that, "and the Lord will know of me, that the monk named Bhaddali is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction". He knew the factors but he didn't realize the full implications, the weight of it hadn't struck him. He didn't realize in a way what a terrible thing it was that the Buddha should be thinking of him in this way, as one who was not fully observing his teaching.

Subhuti: No Hiri.

S: No hiri, in a way, yes. He didn't realize it in regard to other monks and nuns and lay people, and even the recluses and Brahmins belonging to other sects. He didn't realize the effect that his action would have on, or how it would look to other People

Alaya: So you are saying that he was unaware of other people.

S: In any real sense, yes. I mean he might have been aware in a superficial sense, but he wasn't aware really. Any real awareness would carry with it an awareness of the implications of what he was doing, the significance of what he was doing. In other words he couldn't see himself as others might see him. Perhaps he lacked reflexive consciousness to some extent.

Alaya: Compared with our set-up it is much more a strict training ground...

S: Well, yes and no. I mean I was just looking through the Vinaya Pitaka and there is plenty of backsliding there on the part of monks. No doubt about that. We were discussing earlier on in the afternoon this whole question of rules, and it does seem in a way laying down rules is counter-productive, in the sense that, as for instance with regards drawing up rules for the cook and all that sort of thing. If one doesn't catch the spirit of the rule, well if one is obliged to observe the rule outwardly, technically but actually you would be finding a way around the rule, which will break the underlying principle completely. We were discussing it in regard to the question of food, but the principle is for the moderation in food, but if you make a rule that you mustn't eat after twelve o'clock, well people may well observe that rule, quite faithfully, but completely forget the underlying principle and think it is all right to overeat, provided of course you do it before twelve o'clock. So it would seem better really to leave people with principles, rather than try to embody the principles in too many rules.

Subhadra: Presumably the Buddha made this rule because of their particular environment.

S: We discussed all that yesterday. Just listen to the tapes.

Sthirananda: In our study group we talked quite a lot about the implications of the good name, the reputation, ...

S: Because with regards to the other groups, it is one thing if [45] they think that you are doing something with which they disagree. You may have a bad reputation with them because they don't believe in what you are doing, but it is quite another thing if you get the reputation that you are not united, or that all of you are not faithfully pursuing what you profess to be pursuing, in this case it was the monk Bhaddali who was supposedly committed to the Buddha and his teaching, but was in fact was not fully practising what the Buddha asked him to practice. So this would give the impression not just of a movement that was in the wrong, because you can still be united even though in the wrong, but of a movement which was in fact not fully united, because someone within the movement who was in fact in disagreement with something that the Buddha had laid down and was not willing to accept it and follow it.

Alaya: So would this then have the effect of obscuring to those people their seeing of the Buddha. If they heard that his disciples weren't doing what he asked them, would that in some way lower their esteem of the Buddha.

S: In a sense it would.

Alaya; and it would close off their receptivity to him.

S: Well they would probably be not very receptive anyway, but it would give them the impression of a movement that was not completely united. I mean they might disagree with him, even dislike him, but if they felt it was united, at least they would have to feel a certain amount of respect for it. They wouldn't feel that respect if they felt it was a disunited or fragmented movement or a movement in which the Buddha's disciples were not doing their best to follow him.

Alaya: Why would he want that respect? So that those people were still open to receiving the truth of his understanding or what ? Why should other sects have respect ?

S: Well at least they would then realize that since it was a united Order or movement it was something to be reckoned with; they had to be a bit careful with regards to how they treated it. What if they felt that it was a divided movement, well they might not speak well of it, they might sort of scoff at it, and that perhaps would effect who would otherwise might have been impressed by it or might have joined it.

Prasannasiddhi: Presumably they themselves would not be impressed by it...

S: Well I am taking it that they are already committed to some other group, so that there is no question of really convincing them, but there is such a thing as a large mass of uncommitted people, and if they hear from these non-Buddhists that, "well the Buddhist Order is like this and like that" well they may be unfavourably impressed Whereas if they had heard something different they might have been favourably impressed.

Subhuti: There are examples of this in the Majjhima-Nikaya of lay-people, not Buddhist followers, discussing different sects and what they pick up is that the Buddha's disciples do what he says, and follows his training, and that the followers of other sects don't. So it seems

to be quite an important factor.

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S: In other words if your own professed followers appear not to take you seriously, how you can expect other people outside to take you or those followers seriously, or the whole movement ?

Alaya: So what should have Bhaddali done?

S: Well, he was prevaricating, we do seem to have arrived at the conclusion that he was just putting up resistance to the Buddha for some reason or other. He wasn't stating a genuine difficulty.

Alaya: But he did stay around, he didn't go off. He was having difficulties, but he stayed around.

S: What are you trying to say?

Alaya: Well it seems that he committed the lesser of two evils...

S: Well he could have behaved more badly, there is no doubt about that, but the fact that he could have behaved more badly is not exactly to be reckoned as a virtue. He could have done worse, yes of course he could, he could have done what Devadatta did, but how relevant is that ? Everybody could do worse, everybody could do better.

Alaya: I was just thinking that it doesn't take much imagination to put yourself in his shoes, and at that time it wouldn't have helped even then if he had thought that. He didn't see that other people... but it wouldn't have helped even if at that time he had seen them.

S: Well we don't know, we can only speculate But if he had been more aware or more developed, then perhaps he could have realized it, and not behaved in the way that he did, and it would have been an incentive not to behave in that way.

Alaya: If his heart was having doubts then his respect of others would surely not have...

S: But they seem not to have been genuine doubts, well this is the conclusion we arrived at, wasn't it? His scruples weren't genuine scruples, they were quite irrational, that was shown by his response to the second suggestion.

Alaya: I thought that these irrational scruples were to cover up a more, a deeper underlying doubt.

S: There is no evidence for that. It doesn't come up... why is he confessing ? He is confessing to the Buddha because he has committed a transgression. There doesn't seem to be anything positive in his attitude at all. I mean he is not saying, "Oh I misunderstood, actually I was thinking such and such", no there is nothing like that. It is a plain straightforward transgression. He doesn't go into the details of why he transgressed, because psychoanalysis hadn't been invented then, but there is no doubt that the Buddha also characterizes his attitude as unskillful.



Prasannasiddhi: It does seem that he 's sort of reflected on it. It is interesting that he has been able to be with the monks that long and actually had time to reflect on his situation, and come to his own conclusion and then to be quite clear about it. It is quite good. [47)

S: The monks had given him a hint, that he had better not miss his opportunity. So he took that hint.

Prasannasiddhi: It is interesting the part they..., it does seem that he was in a quite a strong sort of group, being in that community of monks, and that they are not kind of reacting and they are not sort of making him feel bad or forcing him, well not sort of reacting, they are just kind of treating the situation as positively as they can, and they seem to have allowed him the time to come to his own conclusion. But they can see that he's coming to that conclusion, and they are encouraging him to make steps. But they are not sort of casting him in a role as a bad person, they are quite objective as well.

Alaya: Why is the Buddha saying this to him after he has confessed ?

S: Well, why is he saying it ?

Subhuti: He is spelling out the implications in detail.

S: Well perhaps even though he has confessed he doesn't realize the full implications of what he has done or what he did. Perhaps he realized that he should have acted in accordance with the Buddha's instructions, but he doesn't realize the wider implications of his resistance or his disobedience and perhaps he hasn't even thought of that, even though he has confessed. Because sometimes one can see one has made a mistake, but perhaps one doesn't realize what a big mistake one has committed. And the Buddha is pointing out that perhaps his mistake is bigger than he realizes, perhaps there is a whole dimension, a whole perspective that he has not taken into consideration at all.

Subhuti: That seems to be the implications of it, that it is a pretty sort of trivial instance in the first case, he confesses that, and then the Buddha shows him what that means.

S: Yes, it is as though the Buddha rubs it in even. Because again he says, "At that time this was not realized either by you Bhaddali" And then again Bhaddali says, " Yes a transgression overcame me", and then the Buddha says, "Indeed Bhaddali, this transgression overcame you, foolish, misguided and wrong". He doesn't let him get away from it. In other words a confession needs to be a full confession, not a semi-confession where you confess a bit, and hope that the rest will be over-looked, sort of thing.

Subhuti: It is part of the acknowledgement, isn't it, the person who is as it were acknowledging it, also needs to have seen the depths of what has been happening..

S: Yes, you could say, as we have discussed before, in as much as Bhaddali needs the Buddha's acknowledgement, the Buddha also needs to be quite sure before he forgives Bhaddali, whether Bhaddali is fully aware of what needs to be forgiven. I mean for instance somebody may do something that might upset you, and you say, "Oh that really upset me," and they say, "Oh I'm sorry", but they don't really realize what they have done, they don't think about it enough, they need to realize in depth what effect that whatever they did or said

had upon you, or what its consequences actually were, and they mustn't take it sort of too lightly, or expect forgiveness too quickly before they have fully realized what it is in fact that they have done. The confession [48] must be a full confession before the acknowledgement of the confession can be a full acknowledgement. So the Buddha is as it were saying, "all right, you want a full acknowledgement, that is all right by me, but I want a full confession, do you really realize what you have done? Do you realize the implications, do you realize the effect that your actions have had on other people?" Perhaps Bhaddali has been thinking only about the effect on him. Maybe he has been thinking only, "Well I have disobeyed the Buddha, I haven't followed his instructions, I won't make any spiritual progress" and he has entirely forgotten how it may seem to other people of various categories, and the effect that it may have on them, and the general reputation of the Order, perhaps he hasn't thought of that at all. So the Buddha is bringing it to his notice.

Subhuti: Yes, probably all that he has realized is that he hasn't seen the Buddha for three months, that is the only implication.

S: I mean we did have a little example on a retreat once, when, I don't remember the details, but it does provide a sort of parallel: Somehow a community member got angry with another community member in front of a number of people who were on retreat, so they might think, "Oh I am sorry that I got angry, I shouldn't have got angry" thinking that "well if I get angry, it is not good for my spiritual development, and I upset the other person" but they might not have realized at all what effect it has on the people who were on the retreat and witnessed all that, so this case is a little like that. So the Buddha is saying, "No, it does not just effect you, it does not just effect me or even just the other monks, it effects everybody in contact with you, everybody who knows about us, knows about the Order, you have to realize that too". After all as a bhikkhu he is a member of the Sangha the Spiritual Community, so his behaviour will effect in a way the way the whole community behaves, because he is a part of it, so his reputation is their reputation, their reputation is his reputation, his good name will be their good name and vice-versa. But it would appear that Bhaddali had overlooked all that. He had taken a too narrow view of the situation, thinking of his fault as something that effected just himself and not realize its implications for the whole order and the reputation of the order.

Subhuti: It is almost as if he has dropped out of the Order for the moment, you get almost that impression from that meeting,

S: where he sort of wavers back and forth. Well, you could say he is an individualist because he says in effect, "I don't feel like obeying that rule", and then he drops out of contact with the other bhikkhus, perhaps some difficulty in re-establishing it, and then he doesn't realize the effects of his behaviour on the reputation of the Order, so far as the Buddha's followers are generally concerned (unclear). So he is something of an individualist. I must remember not to give anybody the name of Bhaddali (laughter)

Subhuti: Well he did confess in the end.

S: That is true, but so did Angulimala, but one doesn't give anybody the name of Angulimala.

Subhuti: Do you remember when we were in Tuscany you talked about integration as something that happened as it were within you but [49] you could also talk about integrating

yourself with others and it is a bit as if you have to integrate yourself with the Sangha. The consideration of your reputation, you are not just considering your own reputation, your own position, you are considering the whole Sangha, and he sort of drops out of that into being a narrow individualist.

S: Yes, it is like when somebody goes from the Order to an outside group, well you are not exactly a representative, but then on the other hand people do get their impression about the Order as a whole from you. If you are friendly and positive, they will think, "oh they are friendly and positive people" and vice-versa. So you cannot, after you have become a "member" of any body, whether a positive group, or a spiritual community behave in a way which leaves them out of consideration, that is no longer possible.

I don't know whether this is an apposite comparison but it is as though when you get married, you can no longer behave as though you are a single man in any respect. Really if you are married, you are totally married. So in the same way if you are a member of a movement, organization, spiritual community you cannot act in a way that would appear to negate that. You must take that fact into consideration the whole time. You cannot ever sort of go on holiday. You may not be actually wearing your kesa but you are in fact always an Order Member, whether other people know it or not.

Prasannasiddhi: That is something that I have been feeling recently, it is almost as if one is immersed in new life style a completely new world in a way.

S: Some years ago, I made a remark which some people considered quite sort, well I won't say revolutionary, but quite unexpected, some people appreciated it, others didn't. I said that "an Order Member must be an Order Member even in bed". If you see what I mean? But some people at that time did have the impression that there were certain situations in which that all just went to the wind, you just forgot about that, and you came back to it afterwards. Whereas my point was that you just couldn't do that. If you couldn't be in it as an Order Member, you shouldn't be in it at all. But if you could be in it as an Order Member, well it didn't matter what the situation was. So there is no such thing as having a little holiday from the Order.

Prasannasiddhi: Right, you are either in or you are out.

S: Well, yes, ... it is rather like when is this fine point when insight arises, it may in certain cases be difficult to tell but in principle yes, even though you cannot actually perceive you are actually in or out.

I used to say in the very early days, that there is no such thing as an honorary Order Member. Of course that point is obvious now, but in those days it was necessary to say that, some people regarded being an Order Member as just like getting a sort of honorary degree, which you did not have to work for, you just got it.

Alaya: So you can go into any situation so long as you go into it as an Order Member.

S: Yes, because if it is an unskilful situation, well how can you go into it as an Order Member? It is not possible. I mean can you commit a [50] murder as an Order Member? Well that is clearly not possible. So it really rests with your own conscience, do you feel like an

Order Member in that situation, taking Order Member in the real sense, do you feel like an Order Member, or can you feel like an Order Member in that situation, or do you feel that it is something totally incompatible, and to be in that situation you have to forget about being an Order Member and remember afterwards when you are out of the situation. I mean for instance some people might go off to the Continent on holiday take their girlfriend and just do anything, forget that they are an Order Member, have a complete holiday from it, and come back to it afterwards two weeks later or a month later or whatever it is . Some people might take that attitude, but it would be a completely wrong attitude.

Alaya: They would find it hard anyway. I mean how could they forget?

S: Well there are times when people do forget to some extent.

Andy: There are times when you switch off.

S: Hm, it is, it is switching off.

Andy: You feel that you just cannot be what you are in this particular environment and you just switch off for a while, it shouldn't happen.

S: It shouldn't happen. It is like when you get into an argument maybe or a quarrel with somebody, well, are you behaving, are you being an Order Member in that situation? In a way you have forgotten what you're supposed to be doing, what you are in a sense.

Subhuti: It goes very much against the grain with most people's conditioning. You are not even accustomed to think like this at the group level, whereas you read some people's pride in their families for instance, they consider that they have to keep up the family reputation and so on, we don't seem to think like that at all.

S: A lot of people with whom we are in contact , seem to have a quite negatively individualistic attitude.

Subhuti: Yes, maybe it is just people that we are in contact with. Is it general or is it just sort the people that we happen to be in contact with?

S: I think to a great extent it is the sort of people that we are in contact with. I think there are quite a few people in England who do have some pride in the particular groups to which they belong. I think there is more of it around than we have personally come into contact with. People who are proud of their families or even their firm. or some other group that they belong to.

Prasannasiddhi: I think also the times that we live in are not as strong as they have been previously. I mean in Elizabethan times people seem more positive in a way, and in the last century it seems that people seemed more positive at least with regards to the strength of feeling for the members of their own groups.

S: Not that one doesn't remain in contact with other people [51] (We) are so much more mobile than they were, I think that that has an effect. I mean you often read about people in England, some people are in touch year after year, decade after decade. I remember reading in

this connection the life of Voltaire who seemed to have friendships which lasted seventy years and there are quite a lot in the last chapters of the life of Voltaire who lived to well over eighty. There was a chapter I remember reading, Voltaire and his old friends, they were all in their eighties, and they had been friends for well over seventy years in many cases, and the author spoke of this charmed circle of these eighty odd year old people, some were even ninety who were still carrying on, who were still in contact after all those decades. We just don't have that sort of thing now. People aren't around the same places long enough.

Subhuti: You are saying that you think that we tend to be in contact more with ...

S: negatively individualistic... well individualistic people to begin with, ... I think a lot of people break away from the group are individualistic, rather than because they are real individuals. Perhaps it is justified. So the people who come to us tend to be not budding individuals, but individualists, who have to be made into budding individuals. And I think there is often a strongly negative element in their individualism. It is as though they are not even positive group members. That is why in the FWBO we seem to have to provide people with a positive group first, before they can move on to join, so to speak, a spiritual community, which is a stage further on.

Sthirananda: It is almost like a product of their individualism is this disbelief that a positive group can exist.

S: Yes, and that effects ultimately their attitude even to the spiritual community. I mean in some cases they seem to carry over something of their negative individualism even into the spiritual community, even into the Order itself, in some cases.

Sthirananda: It raises the question to what extent one could be an individual if one's in that state in a positive group.

S: Well, it is more likely that the positive group is a basic from which one can develop individuality. I think if one hadn't had an experience of the positive group, one's individuality even though quite genuine may be a bit limited or a bit warped. It is just like a flower that is growing up between stones. OK it does grow and it does produce some flowers but it is a rather stunted plant, compared with what it might have been.

Prasannasiddhi: Could it be that perhaps our society at the moment is particularly productive of individualistic types of people?

S: I wouldn't like to risk a generalization. It is just simply that we seem to meet quite a lot of them in the way of contact with the Friends.

Prasannasiddhi: I was just wondering about whether the structures in our society, such as the small units people seem to live in, [52] the nuclear family, the fact that everyone can have their own home, their own car, it tends to sort of make people more into kind of units, individual units...

S: Well I have often referred to the more positive attitude that one finds apparently in India. They do seem to have a more positive experience of group life. Very likely because, their immediate group, the first group that they have experience of that of the family is a

comparatively large one, and to that extent perhaps comparatively positive. I had a letter only a few days ago from Dhammalocana telling me about the death of her brother and she is left with eighteen people to support, well not left with them, because she was supporting them before, but she was hoping that this brother, who was getting himself established, would be able to take over some of the responsibility, but he has had an accident and was killed, and so she is left indefinitely for quite a few years with the responsibility of supporting eighteen people, covering three if not four generations. She lives apart from her husband, he depends on her to some extent, that is Dharmarakshita, but she is the real breadwinner, and has been for years. That involves the responsibility of marrying off her brothers and sisters, and all the expense that that will involve. She was hoping to withdraw a bit from all that and give more time to the FWBO, so it is quite a sort of despairing letter because she realizes that she will just have to buckle to and continue that responsibility for another ten or fifteen years. And also ... children of her own (End of Tape)

But anyway maybe it does seem that there is a whole dimension of this... a whole set of implications of his actions, that Bhaddali did not recognize. Maybe we should discuss this in greater detail, this whole question of the importance of the reputation of the Order, or in the case of the original Bhikkhu Sangha and in the case of the Western Buddhist Order

Subhuti: It does seem that individualism is in a way the theme of the Sutta, at least the first part of the Sutta.

Alaya: It is not only the reputation of the Order, it goes for the reputation of the Buddha as well.

S: Anyway these are questions that arise out of that which we need to go into at some length, some other time. All right lets leave it here for the present.

Next day:

S: All right then where did we get to then? What were we discussing? The Buddha says, "at that time this was not realized by you Bhaddali". The Lord was staying at Sarvatthi and the Lord will know of me that the monk named Bhaddali is not one that carries out in full the training under the teachers instruction". We discussed that at some length. And then he went on to to say, "at that time this was not realized by you Bhaddali, nor at that time was this realized by you Bhaddali, a number of monks who have come to Sarvatthi for the rains will also know of me that the monk named Bhaddali is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction". Also that nuns would know, the lay-followers would know, even recluses and brahmins belonging to other sects who had come to Sarvatthi for the rains would also know of me that [53] Bhaddali, a disciple and an elder under the recluse Gotama is not one who carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction. At that time this was not realized by you either Bhaddali. Did we go into that sufficiently ? I think we had concluded that he was not...

Kovida: I think we had concluded that he was not fully aware of his actions, that didn't realize what was actually happening.

S: Yes, we talked about him being perhaps a bit individualistic, that he hadn't realized that his

actions would be known to a number of people and that might effect the reputation of the whole Order: we talked about that. Perhaps in a way it was sufficient. So the Buddha having said that, Bhaddali goes on to say "Reverend Sir a transgression has overcome me foolish misguided and wrong that I was, may the Lord acknowledge the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future." And in a way the Buddha emphasizes that; he repeats it in a way "Indeed Bhaddali a transgression overcame you, foolish misguided and wrong that you were in as much as while a rule of training was being laid down by me, and while the training was being undertaken by the Order of Monks, you made known your inability." Inability is within inverted commas as it were. Bhaddali was just putting up resistance, that was pretty clear.

Right then, we go on to a completely new section of the Sutta:

"What do you think about this Bhaddali, there might be a monk here freed both ways, to whom I might speak thus, "Come you monk, be a causeway for me across the mire", would he make a causeway of himself, or would he twist his body in another direction, or would he say, "No". "Not this, Revered Sir." What do you think about this, Bhaddali, there might be a monk here freed through intuitive wisdom, a mental realizer, one to view, freed through faith, who strives after Dhamma, who strives after faith, and to whom I might speak thus, "Come you monk, be you a causeway across the mire", would he make a causeway of himself, or would he twist his body in another direction or would he say, "No". "Not this, Revered Sir." What do you think about this, Bhaddali, at that time were you Bhaddali free both ways, or freed through intuitive wisdom or a mental realizer, or one that had won to view, or one freed through faith, or one striving after Dhamma, or one striving after faith. "Not this, Revered Sir". At that time were not you, Bhaddali empty, void, fallen short ? "Yes, Revered Sir. Revered Sir a transgression overcame me, foolish, misguided, wrong that I was, in as much as I made known my inability while a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord, and while the training was being undertaken by the Order of monks, may the Lord acknowledge the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future." Indeed Bhaddali, a transgression overcame you, foolish, misguided and wrong that you were, in as much as while a rule of training was being laid down by me, and while the training was being undertaken by the Order of monks, you made known an inability. But since you, Bhaddali, see the transgression as a transgression and confess it according to the rule, we acknowledge it for you. For Bhaddali in the discipline of the Aryan, this is growth, whoever seeing a transgression as transgression confesses according to the rule he comes to restraint in the future." [54]

S: First of all we had better go into these different classes of persons. The one freed through intuitive wisdom, a mental realizer one to view, freed through faith, who strives after Dhamma, and who strives after faith. I have dealt with these in The Three Jewels. Freed through intuitive wisdom is pannavimutta, and the mental realizer is kayasakkhi, one to view is the drstiprapta, one freed through faith is saddhavimutta presumably, let me see what the text says, and one who strives after Dhamma the dhammanusarin, and the faith follower the Sradhdhanusarin.

Kovida: There is one who is freed through intuitive wisdom.

S: Ah yes, both ways means through wisdom and through mind, that is to say prajnavimutta and chittavimutta. We can go into that in a minute. Let me see what these terms are. Yes,

well, there are these different classes of persons, pass me a copy of The Three Jewels please, let me just check what I have said there. It is under the Assembly of the Elect. Yes, we really need to go through this here. You know there is this well known division of the Arya-Sangha into the Arhant and the Non-Returner, the Once-Returner and the Stream-Entrant, each divided according to Path and Fruit, that is the Eightfold Arya-Sangha. But sometimes the Arya-Sangha is considered differently as made up of seven Arya-Pudgalas, and these are the seven mentioned here in this particular text. In the text, the Buddha starts at the top and works his way down, in the Three Jewels, I have started at the bottom and worked my way up. So first of all, one and two, that is to say, six and seven in the Bhaddali Sutta, the Faith follower and the Doctrine follower. There has been quite a bit of general discussion about those. And then three and four, the one liberated through faith, and the one who has attained to vision. These are respectively according to what I have written here designations of the faith follower, all the remaining stages of the transcendental path and of the doctrine-follower of all of them save the last one. This is the traditional Theravada classification according to the Abhidharma. Then there is the Kayasaksin, the body witness. I have discussed what that means. It isn't really very clear in the tradition, and then six and seven there is the one liberated through wisdom and the doubly liberated one, both of these are Arhants. And I have said here "the doctrine follower on becoming an Arhant is known as a wisdom liberated one while the faith follower and the body witness alike receive the designation of the doubly liberated one, despite the misunderstandings at present current in some parts of the Buddhist world, the former does not attain Arhantship by means of wisdom, prajna, alone; for to the development of wisdom itself in the sense of transcendental insight into the true nature of existence, concentration, Samadhi, is necessary."

Anyway if we want to get a fuller understanding of who and what those seven persons are, you'll have to go through this particular section of The Three Jewels. It is in a way a more interesting classification than the eightfold one, but it isn't much gone into in modern Buddhism, though I have dealt with it, not fully, but I think fully enough-in this particular chapter.

Subhuti: They are all Aryas.

S: They are all regarded as Arya-pudgalas, yes. Anyway we have to understand the point of the Buddha's reference to them. First of all the Buddha is asking what do you think about this Bhaddali, there might be a monk here, freed both ways, that is to say an Arhant liberated by both wisdom and insight, to whom I might speak thus, "Come you monk, be a causeway for me across the mire, would he make [55] a causeway of himself or would he twist his body in another direction, or would he say "No" ?" And Bhaddhali says, "Not this Revered Sir." So what is the point of what the Buddha is saying here? What is the point of that example?

Subhuti: Would someone who was an Arhant be receptive to it to him?

S: This is what it boils down to, this is basically what the Buddha is saying. There seems to be a reminiscence of, well I don't know whether it is a reminiscence, but there is an incident in one of the Buddha's previous lives, according to tradition, probably a later tradition, that the Buddha when he was the ascetic Sumedha didn't he make a causeway of himself across the mire for Dipankara to walk on?, yes? So what does that sort of represent? It is a bit like in English history, Sir Walter Raleigh spreading his cloak, his new cloak for Queen Elizabeth to walk on across a puddle. So in the case of Sumedha, he did it as a spontaneous expression of



devotion to the Buddha of those days. So what is really the Buddha saying here ? He is saying that "if someone is an Arhant, then whatever I ask him to do, he will do. If I ask him even to make a causeway of himself across the mud, so that I can walk upon him, he will do that". So what does that suggest on the part of that person, that Arhant, in this case? It is not just that he is receptive to the Buddha, it is even more than that, isn't it?

Subhuti: Devoted.

S: Even more than that, there is no egotism whatsoever, because a lot of people would not like to be used in that sort of way, somebody else just treading on them, just walking on them, walking over them quite literally, it is almost the last thing that anyone would want to put up with.

Kovida: Prepared to lay down his life

S: Right, he'll lay down his body anyway, yes, so... Just lie down in the mud, so that I can walk on you to the other side. Would he make a causeway of himself or would he twist his body in another direction or would he say, "no", and Bhaddali says, "No". Bhaddali says that he wouldn't refuse, Bhaddali at least knows enough to understand that someone who is an Arhant, who is liberated both ways, would do whatever the Buddha asks him to do. He recognizes that.

Prasannasiddhi: So his, "Not this Revered Sir", refers to the last statement, "would he say, No?". It doesn't refer to the other two, so he would make a causeway of himself.

S: Yes, he would make a causeway of himself. In other words the Buddha is saying, don't forget the context, "all that I ask you to do, or suggest is that you should take food at one session, at one sitting and you won't even do that, a little suggestion that you couldn't accept, but take the case of someone who is enlightened, who is an Arhant, even if I asked them to lie down and make a causeway of themselves in the mire, would they do that?, yes they would do that." He is contrasting as it were the resistance that Bhaddali puts up to the Buddha's instructions with the complete acceptance of anything he asks them to do on the part of someone who is an Arhant.

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Prasannasiddhi: But why would they, an arhant, do that? Would it be just because he has a strong regard for the Buddha, or is it because he has sort of total faith, that the Buddha wouldn't ask anything of him that would not be...

S: Well first of all he is an Arhant, one has to consider what that means. Presumably he understands the mind of the Buddha, and being Arhant he has got nothing to gain himself, according to the context. He has done what he had to do, as the text often says, so it is not that he does that as part of his spiritual training, that it would be good for him. No, there is no question of any further spiritual training because he has reached Nirvana, so why should he do it? There could only be two reasons, one out of pure devotion for the Buddha, even though there is no benefit to himself as a result of that devotion whatever, but still that devotion is there. There is no question even of trusting the Buddha. He doesn't have to trust the Buddha because he is an Arhant. And on the other hand it is as an example of as it were obedience to others who are not Arhants, and who are not even on the spiritual path perhaps.

Prasannasiddhi: So it is not even sort of... I was thinking that it would be just because he would know the Buddha so well that he would know that the Buddha wouldn't ask him to do anything unreasonable.

S: Well, it's even more than that, because being an Arhant, you could say that his mind is in a sense at one with the mind of the Buddha. It is not that he would be having trust or confidence that the Buddha would only ask him to do something that was reasonable. I mean that question wouldn't even arise, he would see things in the same way that the Buddha would see things, they would be as it were co-operating in a sense they would have one mind even, you could say. I mean externally, the Buddha is the Buddha, the Arhant is the Arhant, the Buddha is or was the teacher, the Arhant is or was the disciple, so it is as though they play this little game for the benefit of other people: The Buddha might say to the Arhant, "well make of yourself a causeway", and the Arhant complies with that. It is not on the ordinary sort of level, of obedience or disobedience, even that question does not arise. The Arhant is completely in harmony with the Buddha, he offers no resistance to anything that the Buddha might suggest or ask him to do.

Kovida:(Indistinct)

S: Yes it does in a way, yes. So again this is emphasizing the point perhaps of the reputation of the Order. Because the Arhant in behaving in that way would be showing to the world as it were an example of obedience to the Buddha, obedience to the Teacher. I mean the outside world might not understand well he is an Arhant or anything like that, he just appears as a disciple of the Buddha, behaving in an obedient way, responding to what the Buddha asks him to do.

One must also remember the cultural context. I mean probably in no culture would anybody be exactly happy to be trodden on, but in India they have got quite strong feelings about being touched by somebody's feet. I mean you touch the feet of only someone who is definitely superior to you. Otherwise to touch someone with your feet would be considered as an insult even today. [57] So to ask someone to lie down so that they can walk on you is even of greater significance in that ancient Indian context. You would have to be pretty devoid of egotism to allow someone to do that in that sort of way.

So in other words, the sort of incident that the Buddha is envisaging is one that illustrates the complete harmony between the Buddha and the Arhant, the Teacher and the disciple, as contrasted with the disharmony which existed at least so far as Bhaddali was concerned between him and the Buddha. It is exactly the opposite sort of case. Bhaddali cannot even accept a suggestion about eating at one sitting, but an Arhant that is liberated in both ways could without any difficulty accept a suggestion of this sort.

And then the Buddha goes through all these other holy persons, he says, "If I was to ask someone who had been freed through intuitive wisdom to do this? Yes they would. Someone who is a mental realizer? yes, One to view? yes, or freed through faith? Or even one who strives after the Dhamma or strives after faith, would they act in accordance with my instructions?" and again Bhaddali has to admit, Yes they would.

Then the Buddha says, "what do you think Bhaddali, at that time were you Bhaddali freed both ways, or freed through intuitive wisdom or a mental realizer or one that had won to

view, or one freed through faith, or one striving after Dhamma, or one striving after faith?  
Not this revered Sir. So what is the point of that enquiry?

Subhuti: In a sense, he is not even an Arya, so he almost needs to obey the Buddha more.

S: I don't think that is the main point that the Buddha is making. I think he is making him realize just where he stands, that ... you could put it in a logical form, if someone who is an Arya is obedient to the Buddha, someone who is not obedient to the Buddha is not an Arya, is not a member of the Arya-Sangha. So Bhaddali is being made to realize exactly where he stands. "So at that time were you not Bhaddali, empty, void, fallen short" and again it is sort of rubbed in. If their behaviour was characteristic of someone who was an Arya, well Bhaddali's behaviour is being characteristic of someone who is definitely not an Arya. Therefore he has to admit, "yes Revered Sir, a transgression overcame me, foolish misguided and wrong that I was, in as much as I made known an inability while a rule of training was being laid down by the Lord, and while the training was being undertaken by the Order of Monks, may the Lord acknowledge the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future."

So I mean perhaps Bhaddali had the idea originally that he was maybe quite spiritually developed, and he had a right to have an opinion of his own, and differ from the Buddha, and not accept the Buddha's suggestion, not accept the Buddha's advice and instruction, he might have had that sort of idea. But then the Buddha has made it clear to him that he isn't spiritually developed at all, he was not in fact behaving like an Aryan, an Aryan would have behaved quite differently from the way in which Bhaddali had behaved even if he was asked to do something much more difficult, much more demanding. In other words, it is being made clear that the resistance that Bhaddali put up to the Buddha's instructions was the resistance which is characteristic of a spiritually underdeveloped person. A mere individualist perhaps, rather than an individual.

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Subhuti: I wonder whether there were intentional symbolic overtones to "a causeway over the mire". Crossing the Stream.

S: But the Buddha doesn't need to cross.

Subhuti: No. But you could say that ... a bit like the Bodhisattva allows the transcendental to pass through him into the world.

S: Yes. He didn't allow himself to be a vehicle for the Buddha. In the case of the Arhant, he is willing to be, or anyone who is a member of the Arya-Sangha, is willing to be a vehicle or an instrument.

To go back a little bit, the Buddha envisages three possibilities, "would he make a causeway of himself, or would he twist his body in another direction, or would he say no." So what do these three possibilities represent? He either does make a causeway of himself, no problem at all, because he accepts the instruction. On the other hand he may say no, that is the other extreme. But then he might also twist his body in another direction, what does that suggest?

Subhuti: He sort of does, but not really.

S: No, I think it suggests conflict. He knows he ought to, but he cannot actually say yes. I mean twisting his body in another direction and not actually saying no, means he doesn't really want to lie down and make of himself a causeway, but he doesn't actually say so. You notice very often in the case of people you ask them to do something that they don't want to do, but they don't like to say that, they wriggle and shift themselves a bit uncomfortably. So this seems to represent this third alternative. You say yes, or you say no, or you sort of experience a conflict. You know you ought to say yes, but you don't really want to. So you behave in that sort of way.

Prasannasiddhi: Could you equate that to someone who had wrong view, someone who had right view, and someone who had Perfect View?

S: Yes, you could say. Well someone who had Right View might experience conflict, ... Or you could say if he had Perfect View he would make a causeway of himself, Perfect Vision let us say, if he had wrong view, he would say no, but if he had Right View he might experience conflict, because he would see what he ought to do, but he might find great difficulty in actually doing it.

Subhuti: What does it actually mean "he would twist his body in the other direction"?

S: I say it is he just sort of shifts himself about in an uncomfortable sort of way. Let me see what the text says, "to writhe". Like writhing yes.

Kovida: Presumably he is not making a causeway.

S: Yes, to writhe, even just bend, bend the body, you notice it says direction is in brackets, to twist is more like it, "would he writhe his body about" would be a better translation. But the meaning is clear isn't it ? It expresses some kind of inner conflict, conflict between what he knows what he ought to be doing and what he actually wants to do; his feeling of not wanting to do something.

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Anyway to go back to where we were. So the Buddha reiterates, "Indeed Bhaddali, a transgression overcame you, foolish misguided and wrong that you were inasmuch as while a rule of training was being laid down by me, and while the training was being undertaken by the Order of Monks, you made known an inability, but since you, Bhaddali, see the transgression as a transgression, and confess it according to the rule, we acknowledge it for you. For Bhaddali, in the discipline for an Aryan this is growth, who everseeing a transgression as a transgression confesses according to the rule, he comes to restraint in the future."

This is quite an important point. That confession is conducive to growth or spiritual development, as we say. This is the basic point that the Buddha is making here. It is good that Bhaddali has been able to see that he made a mistake, that he did wrong, that he transgressed, it is good that he is able to see that and admit it.

Subhuti: What is this "confesses it according to the rule"?

S: That is not quite clear. It possibly means confesses it on the occasion of the fortnightly

meeting. Also that he comes to restraint in the future. Confession of a fault is seen as a means of avoiding that fault in the future. If you see something as a fault and you see that you should not have committed that fault then at the same time you make a resolution that you will not commit that fault again. Because if you see it as something that you should not have done in the past, you will see it as something that you will not or should not do in the future.

: (Indistinct)

S: Yes, so as it were, to admit that you did something that was wrong, is tantamount to resolving that you will not do that in the future, or promising that you will not do that in the future. If for instance you lost your temper yesterday and say "I'm very sorry, I should not have lost my temper", well you are in effect saying that you are going to try not to do that again. So therefore, confession concerns not only the past, it concerns the future.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think that is actually the case? That if you say that you won't do something, then the chances are you won't do it?

S: Well, it is not just saying that you won't do it, but, if you are confessing, it means that you have really seen that something is unskillful, and if you have really seen it as unskillful, well then the implication is that you don't want to do that again. So if you are confessing to someone, to one person or a number of people, that what you did was unskillful, that you are really sorry for that, the implication is that you don't want to do it again, you intend not to do it again, and you are, as it were, promising them that you are not going to do it again. In other words if you really confess, you really resolve not to do that particular thing again. Because to confess means that you really see that a transgression is a transgression, you see that you have made a mistake. If you really see that, surely you won't want to repeat the mistake. So the sincerity of the confession is in accordance with the sincerity of the resolution, or vice versa.

If you say in just an informal way, "Oh. I'm sorry that I did that", well that probably doesn't go that far, and it probably means that you might even do the same [60] thing over again. But if you really see that what you did was unskillful, if you are really sorry for that, and you are really confessing it, then that is tantamount to resolving that you are not going to do, or not going to commit that particular unskillful action. So if you don't resolve not to commit the unskillful action again the chances are you haven't really confessed the unskillful action that you have actually committed. So real confession implies resolution not to commit the offence again. Because under normal conditions if you see you have made a mistake, and that mistake is not to your advantage, well to see that you committed a mistake and it was not to your advantage, is much the same thing, it is practically the same thing as resolving or deciding that you're not going to commit that mistake again. They are the two sides of the single coin.

Subhuti: You do hear people confessing apparently quite genuinely for something they have done, but saying they cannot help it, they are not sure they will be able to stop it in the future.

S: Well perhaps in this case it does amount to a difference between right view and perfect vision. I mean there are no doubt unskillful mental states, and actions that a mere right view is not capable of restraining, only perfect vision can restrain them.

Subhuti: Does that in a way mean that confession implies more than... it implies an element of insight almost.

S: Yes well perhaps one should say ... following another set of distinctions we have established in modern ( ), I should say that there is a merely formal confession, an effective confession, and a real confession. No doubt there is no question of Absolute confession, that would be a contradiction of terms, but you see what I mean.

You could say that there is the ethnic confession, well actually you do have this, in the Buddhist world among monks. It does seem that originally at one stage in the development of the Sangha the fortnightly meeting was an occasion for the confession of any infringement of the Vinaya, That may have been in the course of the Buddha's own life or later, it is very difficult to say. But there certainly was a stage in the development of the early Sangha when that fortnightly meeting was used partly at least for that particular purpose. The monks assembled and if any monk had committed an infringement of the Vinaya, he confessed it on the spot, and suitable action was taken if necessary. But it seems that at a later stage of development there was no actual confession, the monks were called upon to confess but remained silent, and it was taken that no one had anything to confess. That is still the case. But what happened was that before the fortnightly meeting, just immediately before the monks got together in pairs and confessed individually minor offences. So that by the time they actually held the main meeting they were free from any offence having confessed it, and as it were purified themselves. Though that procedure could not really apply to all offences. Some had to be dealt with by the Sangha, but nonetheless that development took place. I remember shortly after my ordination I was in Nepal, and there was an ordination Ceremony (Upasampada) to be held, and the bhikkhus all split up into pairs to confess. That is the first time that I had experienced that sort of thing. But the so called confession in pairs was just one monk rattling off a formula and then the other monk [61] rattling off the corresponding formula and that was that. There was no question of any going into anything that you might actually have done or not. And the monk with whom I was paired off was a Nepalese monk, been a monk for at least ten years I think, and he just said his bit, and he said "you say such and such" and he said it in Pali, and I repeated it after him, and that was that. So that is purely an ethnic confession. It is cultural confession, a confession which has been formalized and which has got no meaning. I mean just like the general confession in the Church of England, "we have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep and there is no health in us etc.", so you just repeat this, it is part of the service on a Sunday morning. You don't give it a thought usually. So one could say that that was ethnic confession, cultural confession, formal confession. A pattern which is kept up without any real significance.

And then there is effective confession. That is to say when you do confess something that you have actually done even though you don't have any real insight in the full sense into its unskilful nature. But at least you have got some understanding that it is something that you shouldn't have done, even though you don't see with complete clarity that you shouldn't have done it, and you make a sort of resolution that you are not going to do that again, because you can see that it shouldn't be done, or shouldn't have been done. But you may or may not be able to keep that resolution however sincerely you make it. That one might describe as effective-confession. Very often you do succeed in maintaining your resolution not to commit that offence again.

But then there is one might say real confession when you have an actual insight into the unskilful nature of what you have done and since it is a question of insight you are to some extent broken a fetter, there is no likelihood of you committing that offence again. You won't in fact commit it again. You have seen through it, you have seen its unskilful nature once and

for all to such an extent that you can never commit that offence again, it is impossible.

If you wanted a complete set, you could say absolute confession is when you have nothing to confess, because there is nothing to confess. Absolute confession is non-Confession. All that you have to confess is that you have nothing to confess.

So one can have in the same way the formal or cultural or ethnic confession, the effective confession, the real confession and the absolute confession, one could look at in this way, and that would account for the fact that or take into consideration that sometimes you can confess sincerely and you really can see that you should not have done what you did and that you ought not to do it again, but nonetheless you may fall victim to the same offence, you may be overpowered. Your right view may be obscured for one reason or another

Prassanasiddhi: Presumably as long as you can fall back, as long as you haven't reached Stream Entry, you cannot be sure of keeping your word.

S: No you can't. You cannot be sure of anything spiritually speaking until one is a Stream Entrant. This means that until you are a Stream Entrant, supportive conditions are indispensable. Even with the supportive conditions there is no guarantee, but the chances of progress are very very greatly increased. The chances of maintaining your present rate of progress are very very greatly enhanced if you enjoy positive conditions or positive circumstances.

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Prassanasiddhi: It is interesting ...the business of the mire and the monks laying body over it. It is like another level of sort of being in a way that they are operating on. They really do have a strong feeling; it's almost a chivalrous state of being, a sort of regard, an honour between them.

S: There is no holding back. There are no reservations. Whereas in the case of Bhaddali he didn't even like to agree to eat at one sitting. And he wasn't even prepared to accept an alternative possibility that the Buddha offered, even that he wasn't ready to accept.

Anyway let's go on to the next paragraph.

Prasannasiddhi: "Herein Bhaddali, some monk is not one that carries out in full the teacher's instructions. It occurs to him, "suppose I were to resort to a remote lodging, to a forest, to the root of a tree, a mountain slope, a wild place, a hill cave, a cemetery, a woodland thicket, the open air, a heap of straw, I should probably realize conditions of further men, the excellent knowledge and insight befitting the Aryans". So he resorts to a remote lodging, to a forest, a root of a tree etc., and as he is staying aloof in this way, the teacher upbraids him, and when they have examined him, his learned fellow Brahma-farers upbraid him, and devatas upbraid him, and the self upbraids the self. He is upbraided by the teacher, and upbraided by his learned Brahma-farers after they have examined him, and upbraided by devatas, and the self upbraided by the self does not realize conditions of further men, the excellent knowledge and insight befitting the Aryans. What is the reason for this? It is thus, Bhaddali since he is not one that carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction."

S: So what is the Buddha getting at here? He gives the example of someone who for instance like Bhaddali wasn't carrying out in full the Buddha's instructions, and such a one went off to a remote lodging a forest, root of a tree etc. with the idea that he might there meditate and realize conditions of further men, uttaramanusidhamma, that is to say realize some stage of the transcendental path, the excellent knowledge befitting the Aryans. But while he is staying there, the teacher upbraids him, his fellow Brahma-farers upbraid him, the devatas upbraid him, and the self upbraids the self, therefore he is not able to realize those higher transcendental conditions and why is this the Buddha asks. Because he is not one who carries out in full the training under the teacher's instruction. So what is happening here?

Well what seems to be happening is, I suppose you come to that point... suppose all right you are meditating, you are trying to develop insight, so your mind will perhaps becomes a little bit clear, you'll start understanding things, but what will be the first thing that comes to your mind as it were? That well you have not been following the Buddha's instructions, the Buddha is upbraiding you, your fellow Brahma-farers, your spiritual friends, even Devatas and you upbraid yourself, you find fault with yourself, and that sort of as it were mental disturbance will prevent, will inhibit your developing transcendental insight, your consciousness that you are not in harmony with the Buddha, because as you start approaching the development of insight, you will see things just a little more clearly, but what will you see a little more clearly? You will see the fact that of your disharmony with the Buddha, and that will prevent you going any further. This is what the Buddha seems to be saying. In [63] other words he is almost saying it is difficult for you to develop insight, if that is impossible, unless you are completely sure to begin with, you are completely confident, that you are completely in harmony with the Buddha's Teaching. You really are faithfully following whatever the Buddha asks you. Because unless you have got that sort of conviction, you cannot develop insight. In other words the development of insight itself suggests a sort of unshakeable faith. But the mere fact that you have been disobedient suggests that that faith is simply not there. So you come to a point where you realize, so to speak, that the unshakeable faith that is necessary for the development of insight you just don't have. And you know that you don't have it because you're conscious of not having followed the Buddha's instructions. You are conscious that the Buddha is upbraiding you, that your spiritual friends are upbraiding you, the devatas are upbraiding you, the self upbraids the self. In other words the Buddha is drawing attention to the fact that there is no real spiritual progress unless you are absolutely convinced within yourself that you are really doing the right thing, or have been doing the right thing. Otherwise it is not possible for you to put all your energy into that particular situation in such a way that transcendental insight, perfect vision does arise.

Prassanasiddhi: This seems to imply that unless you are in the company of the Buddha you won't be able to develop insight?

S: Why is that ?

Prassanasiddhi: Perhaps it doesn't. It seems to imply something more than just ( ? )

S: The implication is, if you have actually disobeyed the Buddha of you are not acting in accordance with the Buddha's instructions. The consciousness that you are not acting in accordance with the Buddha's instructions will inhibit you, undermine your efforts at that moment when you require all your unified energies to develop transcendental insight or perfect vision. It is just like as it were, I don't know whether this is a very good analogy, but



I'll try, supposing you are driving a car, and there is a sort of emergency situation, you need to accelerate and just at that moment that you are accelerating, you realize the car hasn't got that sort of capacity, what would that do to your confidence ? It is a bit like that.

Subhuti: It is interesting that Devatas upbraid him.

S: Well yes, there are a number of passages in the scriptures where Devatas are represented as upbraiding monks who are not making the right sort of effort. Very often the Devata is the relation or friend from a former life, who has been reborn as a Devata as a result of his good deeds or her good deeds and that sort of incident is quite common. In other words the Buddha is saying everybody upbraids you, the Buddha upbraids you, or reproaches you, your spiritual friends, the devatas do, and you even upbraid yourself. You recognize that you have made a mistake, the self upbraiding the self is a sort of idiom for the workings of the conscience.

Prasannasiddhi: So why should the Buddha say this at this point?

S: Well he is making it clear that Bhaddali has stultified himself, he has stultified his own spiritual life, even supposing he does want to go off into the forest, even supposing he does want to meditate, even supposing he does want to develop transcendental insight, he won't be able to do so, because when he comes to the [64] point as it were, the recollection of his disobedience will come up and get in his way and undermine his efforts, his consciousness of his disharmony with the Buddha.

Kovida: (That has philosophical implications as well because it means that the dharma in a sense is Absolute, because it involves his mind, if he is not following the Buddha's path it's all so tied up on a practical level... )

S: Well, if he follows the path at all he is following it on account of the Buddha. But with what confidence can he follow it, especially on those more advanced stages if he becomes conscious that he is not acting in accordance with the Buddha's instructions. The two are sort of self-contradictory, to try and follow the Buddha's path and at the same time not to act in accordance with the Buddha's instructions. Well they are mutually exclusive.

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S: It's as though you can't really make progress on the Buddha's path, on the path shown by the Buddha, unless you're absolutely certain within your own mind that you're doing everything you possibly can in accordance with the Buddha's instructions or teachings.

Prasannasiddhi: That you're in total harmony with the Buddha not only according to his instructions but that you feel...

S: You have to have the inner feeling that you are doing all that you possibly can. Or have done all that you possibly can. Otherwise if you don't have that consciousness any further efforts that you make will be undermined.

Prasannasiddhi: Not only that, you've got to have confidence that... well you've got to feel that you're completely on... that you're completely.. that you really do feel that the Buddha is ... that you don't have doubts about any of the teachings of the Buddha.

S: Even any apparently trivial thing, yes?

Kovida: It does imply faith.

S: It does imply faith, it implies commitment.

Prasannasiddhi: That you have no doubt about anything.

S: Well no, well, maybe that in a sense, would be too much because you have some intellectual, not exactly doubts, but uncertainties about the teaching from a more philosophical point of view, but you must at least be conscious of having made a full and honest effort to carry out the Buddha's instructions. Otherwise when you come to the point of trying to develop insight the fact that you haven't been making as much of an effort as you should have done will undermine you. Well, to give another example supposing that you had been studying for an examination, you are in the examination hall and the question paper is in front of you but you suddenly become conscious that you've been wasting your time, you haven't studied properly, you haven't gone through all the books you should have done. Well that would completely undermine your effort to answer those questions. If you become conscious as you sit there that you've not done the necessary preparation (pause) Or if you have to give a lecture and you realize you haven't prepared for it properly. It can... if you suddenly realize, maybe you haven't thought about it but you sort of stand up in front of the audience and you see maybe that it's a very intelligent audience, more intelligent than you'd expected, and here they all are eagerly waiting for you to speak and you realize, well good heavens I've not prepared properly, I've not really much to say, that can undermine even what you might have been able to do.

Subhuti: I remember Sagaramati saying that something like that had happened at a class the other day. I talked to him about it, he reported it in...

S: Yes I wondered what... because he referred to Nagabodhi, Nagabodhi's fainting. I wondered what that was all about because that was very extreme.

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Subhuti: He told me a bit about it afterwards, and he said what happened was that he was leading part of the beginners class for more advanced beginners in which they go through the Basic Puja and he realized halfway through his explanation that he wasn't actually in touch with it, he didn't really feel what he was saying and it completely undermined him.

S: Well that's a rather different kind of thing, but still the effect's perhaps similar. A sort of alienation (pause). The general principle seems to be that the consciousness when you're not fully carrying out the Buddha's instructions can even undermine those efforts that you do manage to make. (pause) In other words you don't really succeed or get very far unless you're really wholehearted and been wholehearted all along.

Kovida: (indistinct words) ...abstract but to do that the Buddha's got to be right.

S: What do you mean?

Kovida: That there is only the Buddha's solution.

S: Yes, you've got to be convinced. Well, presumably, Bhaddali is a monk after all, in fact he's been a monk for ten years we're told so maybe it's rather late in the day to have any doubts as to whether the Buddha is right. I mean he has already gone for refuge and everything that he's doing is only really an implementation of that. (pause)

Subhuti: He's in quite a strange position isn't he? The monk who goes off to meditate (is) in quite a strange position because he sort of accepts the teaching in certain respects but not really its spirit.

S: It reminds me of the case of Meghiya in the Udana. He wants to leave the Buddha against the Buddha's wishes to go off and meditate which seems to be the right thing to do, after all the Buddha advised monks to meditate and that sort of thing, but the Buddha does reluctantly allow him to go in the end, at least doesn't stop him going but he doesn't really get on very well. (pause) It's almost as though you can't sort of half follow and half not follow. You can't be half committed. You've got to be wholehearted. Otherwise the effort that you don't make undermines the effort that you actually do make.

Subhuti: It seems as though people can follow general principles but not specifics sometimes. You find it in the FWBO, you find it even in the Order, people are willing to take the most general sort of elements of the Dharma, but not to apply specifics to their circumstances.

S: They're willing to practise, say, Metta Bhavana and radiate Metta to everybody in the world, in the universe in fact but they're not really going to make a real effort to get on with the people that they're actually living with. Or they might accept the principle of generosity, the dana paramita, and they'd be quite happy to give everything to everybody but they're not willing to actually part with some small item if they're actually asked for it by somebody who needs it.

Prasannasiddhi: It implies a split and a lack in integration.

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S: But no doubt that split, that lack of integration will always be there up to Stream Entry at least, but nonetheless there is a sort of sincerity, a sort of honesty, a sort of wholeheartedness of intention that wants to give everything, that wants to do everything that is necessary. And that no doubt suffices.(pause) Perhaps we'd better stop here for a cup of tea.

Kevala: "But Bhaddali, there is some monk here who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction. It occurs to him: 'If I were to resort to a remote lodging - to a forest, to the root of a tree, a mountain slope, a wild place, a hill cave, a cemetery, a woodland thicket, the open air, a heap of straw, I should probably realize conditions of further-men. the excellent knowledge and insight befitting the Aryans'. So he resorts to a remote lodging, to a forest, to the root of a tree, a mountain slope, a wild place, a hill cave, a cemetery, a woodland thicket, the open air, a heap of straw. As he is staying aloof in this way neither the Teacher upbraids him, nor after they have examined him, do his learned fellow Brahma-farers upbraid him, nor do devatas upbraid him, nor does the self upbraid the self. He, neither upbraided by the Teacher, nor upbraided by his learned fellow Brahma-farers after they have examined him, nor upbraided by devatas, nor the self upbraided by the self. realizes conditions of further-men. He, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters and abides in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and

discursive thought, is born of aloofness and is rapturous and joyful. What is the reason for this? It is thus. Bhaddali. for one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction.

S: So here the Buddha envisages exactly the opposite case from the first. (Pause) One could say that in the Buddha's teaching and in the Buddhist tradition generally this consciousness of complete freedom from reproach from any source or any quarter is considered quite important, well one can gather that from this particular text. I mean this is in a way the central point or the crux of the Vajrasattva practice although the context and the level is quite different, where you become conscious of Vajrasattva saying, 'My son, your sins are forgiven' where it's not some external authority forgiving your sins, that isn't possible, but it's your own consciousness that you've nothing with which on account of which to reproach yourself, your conscience is clear, your conscience is free. You've nothing to confess.

Subhuti: It's quite striking how sometimes on a solitary retreat things that you haven't even been conscious of having done unskillfully become quite important. (indistinct sentence).

S: I noticed in Tuscany the - I forget when it was - I forget which day it was, but we had the bonfire and people burning their confessions. No doubt some people had quite a lot to write down, things that they'd thought of while they were there which might not have occurred to them at other times. So it is as though it's made a sort of conditioned precedent of your developing Samatha and then Vipassana that you don't have anything to reproach yourself with. You're conscious that you've made the best effort that you can. Not that you're perfect or anything of that sort... or that you've never [68] made any mistakes but that you're conscious that you have been trying to do as well as you possibly could.

Prasannasiddhi: But in the Vajrasattva practice you're conscious that in an ultimate sense you've never done anything wrong but yes there's also that for purposes of practising the path you could do things wrong and you could...

S: Well, you know, in the Vajrasattva practice there is the visualization which involves a purification so at least as a preliminary step to realizing that you always were pure you have to purify yourself so to speak relatively speaking before you can attain that insight. And your purification of yourself is represented by the actual visualization, where you visualize the nectar, descending on to your head and filling your entire body and purifying your whole system. And if you actually realize that you were pure from the beginning what would be the need for that? It's as though the practice is to bring you to the point where you can develop that insight where - that insight that in the ultimate sense - there is no question of purification. Because you are pure from the beginning. But at present you don't in fact realize that. So in order to realize it you have to purify yourself. Paradoxically. So there is a sort of correspondence. (Pause)

Prasannasiddhi: It's a bit like Manjughosa's pure from the beginning but...

S: Yes, in a way, yes, yes. It's a combination so to speak of the absolute truth and the relative truth (Pause).

Right then, The Buddha goes on to apply what he has just said to all the successive stages of the path right up through all the, well the remaining dhyanas, the remaining rupa dhyanas up

to the Abhijñas, so would you like to read from that next paragraph right down to very near the bottom of page 113.

Kovida: "And again Bhaddali, the monk, by allowing initial and discursive thought, the mind subjectively tranquillised and fixed on one point, enters and abides in the second meditation which is devoid of initial and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful. What is the reason for this? It is thus, Bhaddali, for one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction.

And again, Bhaddali, the monk, by the fading out of rapture, dwells with equanimity, attentive and clearly conscious and he experiences in his person that joy of which the Aryans say: "Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful". and he enters and abides in the third meditation. What is the reason for this? It is thus, Bhaddali, for one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction.

And again, Bhaddali, the monks by getting rid of joy, by getting rid of anguish, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, enters and abides in the fourth meditation, which has neither joy nor anguish and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness. What is the reason for this? It is thus, Bhaddali, for one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction.

He, with his mind thus composed, quite purified, quite clarified ... directs his mind to the knowledge and [69] recollection of former habitations ... Thus he recollects a variety of former habitations in all their modes and details. What is the reason for this? It is thus, Bhaddali, for one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction.

He, with his mind thus composed, quite purified ... directs his mind to the knowledge of the passing hence and arising of beings ... Thus with purified deva-vision surpassing that of men does he see beings as they pass hence, as they arise; he comprehends that beings are mean, excellent ... comely, ugly, well-going, ill-going according to the consequences of deeds. What is the reason for this? It is thus Bhaddali, for one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction.

He, with his mind thus composed, quite purified, quite clarified, directs his mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. He comprehends as it really is: This is anguish ... He comprehends as it really is: This is the course leading to the stopping of anguish. He comprehends as it really is: These are the cankers ... He comprehends as it really is: This is the course leading to the stopping the cankers. Knowing this thus, seeing this thus, his mind is freed from the canker of sense-pleasures and his mind is freed from the canker of becoming and his mind is freed from the canker of ignorance. In freedom the knowledge comes to be: I am freed: and he comprehends. Destroyed is birth, brought to a close the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or so. What is the reason for this? It is thus Bhaddali, for one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction.

S: So this is the end of the first part of the Sutta, yes? The Buddha makes it clear that at every stage of the path the fact that one is able to achieve it, the fact that one is able to attain it depends upon one's fully carrying out the training under the Teacher's instruction. In other words, having a fully receptive attitude, one might say right from the beginning, even with

regard to small things. So what do you think of the overall implications of this? [Pause] What is the Buddha really saying to Bhaddali?

Kovida: It implies a complete commitment.

S: And that commitment must show itself even in what might appear to be small matters. It does seem, going back to what we were discussing last week that Bhaddali's resistance to what the Buddha (unclear) suggested was quite unnecessary, so to speak. In other words what the Buddha is saying is that one who fully carries out the training under the Teacher's instruction can be sure of success at every stage [Pause]. His confidence isn't undermined by any consciousness of not being completely in harmony with the Buddha [Pause].

Prasannasiddhi: So what we get is that one needs to have total commitment and this will be shown in small details.

S: It will be shown even in small details or what seem to be small details. I mean, to go back to the original requirement, in a sense what the Buddha was asking wasn't very much - that the monks should partake of their food at one sitting.

It wasn't that Bhaddali wasn't really able to do this, it wasn't a [70] case of any genuine difficulty, yes, because when the Buddha offered him the alternative of taking some food away with him and finishing off the meal later, he wasn't even willing to accept that, so that suggests a sort of irrational individualistic sort of resistance to what the Buddha was saying so perhaps the Buddha is not sort of inculcating strict sort of letter of the law obedience but I mean perhaps he's pointing out that so long as there's that element of irrational resistance then no progress can be really looked for at all. It's not that the monk has to be a good boy, as it were, and do exactly what the Buddha says, it's not to be taken in that literalistic sort of way, presumably? Presumably the emphasis is not so much on what Bhaddali has failed to do in that particular respect but the way in which he fails to do it, or the attitude of mind, with which he refused to do it, his irrational resistance to being given advice. In other words as we saw last week it's as though Bhaddali represents a sort of individualistic attitude. That can act as a hindrance at every stage of the path.

Prasannasiddhi: Is there any cause for this irrational attitude? (unclear)

S No doubt there is a psychological cause. It might be difficult to find, it might be due to all sorts of reasons. It might be due to micchaditthis, it could be due to some kind of conceit, you know 'Why should you be telling me?' Could be due to an unwillingness to develop, unwillingness to make an effort. He doesn't want to accept advice because that means making an effort, yes?

The text itself doesn't go very much into Bhaddali's state of Mind, exactly what happened, exactly why he was so reluctant to accept the Buddha's advice or even instruction in this particular matter but it's clear enough that his resistance was quite irrational, that he had no real reason for it, yes. The inability he professed wasn't a genuine inability. It was just reluctance, it was just resistance (Pause).

All right, let's go on to the next part of the Sutta. Someone like to read the whole of that next short paragraph?

Subhuti: "When this had been said, the venerable Bhaddali spoke thus to the Lord: what is the cause, revered Sir, what the reason why they constantly take action against some monk here? What is the cause, revered Sir, what the reason that they do not constantly take similar action against some other monk here?"

S: So what do you think this question on Bhaddali's part signifies? What's happened so far as Bhaddali is concerned? I mean why does he ask the question? So to speak. Why does he bring up this sort of issue?

Subhuti: Presumably because he'd been for three months, he's been around for three months and it had taken that time for him to be approached by the other monks.

S: He wasn't approached by the other monks. He approached to them and then they gave him a hint but what was the ... first of all he's enquiring about, well, monks in general, so what does that suggest? I mean, the Buddha's no longer talking about Bhaddali, He's no longer talking about Bhaddali, so what does that suggest?

Voice: He'd been dealt with.

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S: He'd been dealt with, it's sort of closed as it were. He's understood what the Buddha has said, he accepts it.

So it's as though he doesn't need to bother about himself or his mistakes any more. He knows what he has to do, it's all clear, his conscience is free now, perhaps. So he can turn to more general matters. Maybe it means he takes up a sort of connected matter, whereas he's been dealt with in a way by the Buddha. So he asks a more general question, but still connected with this (broad) question, "What is the cause, revered Sir, what the reason why they constantly take action against some monk here? What is the cause, revered sir, what the reason that they do not constantly take similar action against some other monk here?" And the footnote says "Karanam Karonti - This probably means the judicial action that the Sangha (Order) has power to employ. Similarly below adhikerana, "Legal question" refers only to the four types of these that the Sangha is able to deal with. They are treated in detail at Vin.ii.88ff., and come under "ecclesiastical" jurisdiction only, having nothing to do with a secular court of justice." Taking action against, like you say, imposing a penalty, you know excluding him from the Sangha for a certain length of time or something of that sort for some offence that he committed. Or reprimanding him. So Bhaddali is asking what is the cause why they, that is to say the monks so to speak collectively, constantly take action against some other monk here and do not constantly take similar action against some other monk here. What's the reason for this different treatment of different people? So anyway the Buddha answers that point. Like to read the next paragraph.

Prasannasiddhi: "As to this Bhaddali. some monk is a constant offender, full of offences. On being spoken to by the monks he shelves the question by asking another, he answers off the point, he evinces anger and ill-will and discontent, he does not conduct himself properly, is not subdued, does not mend his ways, and does not say 'What can I do to please the Order?' Therefore, Bhaddali, it occurs to the monks: 'This monk, your reverences, is a constant offender, full of offences. On being spoken to the monks he shelves the question... and does not say: 'What can I do to please the Order?' It were good if the venerable ones were to

investigate this monk in such a way that this legal question of his should not be settled quickly'. So, Bhaddali, the monks investigate this monk in such a way that this legal question is not settled quickly."

S: So there are two main points that arise here, one is the different ways in which the monk may react when he's spoken to by the monks collectively and also why in such a case his legal question should not be settled quickly. First of all, the first point. So, "some monk is a constant offender, full of offences. On being spoken to by the monks he shelves the question by asking another". Do you understand what is meant by this? When someone is tackling you about some quite specific matter, something that you've done wrongly, some unskilful behaviour, but you shelve the question, you try to put it aside by asking another. Do you actually find people doing this? Can you think of an example?

Prasannasiddhi: There's this thing of criticism. When you give someone criticism they should sort of relate to the criticism and not sort of start saying "Well you're just saying that because you don't like me" you should just relate to the actual criticism and not sort of start saying "Well you're just saying that because you [72] don't like me. You should just relate to the actual criticism and see whether it's true and if it is the case (unclear)...

S: Isn't that similar to the next one - "answering off the point"? "On being spoken to by the monks he shelves the question by asking another". I don't know how literally one should take this "question", but he does it by asking another. It's more like retorting, yes? For instance someone might say, "Well why were you so greedy at lunch today?" That's shelving the question by asking another. But then the second one "he answers off the point" suggests, you know, just talking at random about something completely different.

Supposing in this case you say "Well why did you lose your temper yesterday?" and he might say "Well it was a nice day yesterday wasn't it" - there you are just talking completely beside the point. He answers off the point. But it's all a way of shelving the question...

... putting the question on the shelf as it were, putting it aside, postponing it, not facing it. Then of course it says "he evinces anger and ill-will and discontent" and then "he does not conduct himself properly" - does that refer to his actual response to being spoken to, do you think, or is this more general?

Subhuti: It's his response.

S: It's his actual response. So what could it imply, what could it mean? "He does not conduct himself properly"? He could sort of shrug his shoulders or look aside or walk off. Or he pretends to be looking at something else. So he does not conduct himself properly. I mean does not conduct himself in the way which, as somebody should conduct themselves if they're being spoken to by the other monks. "and is not subdued", what does that mean, what does that suggest? Let me see what the word is.

Kovida: There's no feeling of remorse.

S: Yes it does imply that.

Subhuti: He isn't polite.



S: Yes, He's not conscious that he's done something, yes?, that deserves rebuke and so he's not sort of subdued in his manner. As though he doesn't realize that he's, doesn't behave in a way suitable for someone who's conscious of having done something that he shouldn't have done.

Voice: (Indistinct )

S: Yes, yes. "Does not mend his ways" means does not give up doing those things on account of which he was being spoken to by the monks. "and does not say: 'What can I do to please the Order?'" What is the significance of this, thinking "what can I do to please the Order"?

Subhuti: Presumably to re-establish harmony.

S: Yes, or bring himself into line with them, yes. Not to say toe the line (Laughter) (Pause) I mean after all if the other monks have to speak to him they can't be happy to have to do that, I mean, it's a sort of painful duty.

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Prasannasiddhi: This sounds like another stock phrase. It doesn't sound as if it quite flows naturally. It's a bit, the way it's put together... (Unclear)

S: It he even starts wondering what can I do to please the Order I mean he'll very soon realize that what would please them most is that he gets back on to the path. That would make them more happy than anything else. Well, what about this whole question of pleasing other people? I mean why should you want to please other people? What does it mean to please other people? Especially other members of the spiritual community, other members of the Order. What does it mean to please them, yes? (Pause)

Subhuti: It's a question of harmony.

S: It's a question of emotional positivity [Long Pause] I'm trying to find the word for "please". It's Atthamanu but it doesn't seem to be in the dictionary [pause]. Well is that clear or reasonably clear? So "on being spoken to by the monks" he reacts as we would say in these ways, shelving the question, etc., etc. "So, Bhaddali, the monks investigate this monk in such a way that this legal question of his is not settled quickly". So why should that be?

Subhuti: Because he'd just react.

S: Yes, it's clear that he's going to react. I mean it's not that the monks themselves are reacting but that they realize that it's going to take a long time. So, they don't hurry, as it were. They investigate the matter at leisure. They take plenty of time over it, so as to avoid the possibility of the monk in question reacting, and just making things worse.

Subhuti: The fact that they do look into things seems to be important. It's presented as a formula here.

S: Yes, a little legalistically almost.

Subhuti: But clearly what is implied is that nothing is...

S: Overlooked. Yes, if it is something which concerns the behaviour of a member of the sangha.

Subhuti: What struck me particularly about the sutta was the degree of harmony which was implied within the Order and the way in which individual members of the Sangha seem to be as if they were accountable, that's not quite the right word, but...

S: Yes, accountable perhaps is the word. Because you've joined the sangha freely and voluntarily, on as if it were certain understanding, yes, that you're going to do this, that you're not going to do that, so that if you fail to abide by that understanding whether explicit or implicit you can, so to speak be held to that. You are accountable. You are accountable because you are responsible. And you are responsible because you have made a voluntary commitment. So, in a way, the other monks would be failing in their duty if they overlooked the fact that someone was failing in his duty. That's why I think in other contexts the point is made that it's an offence to say "Ah well, if you don't sort of look into what I've been doing I won't look into what you've been doing", yes, "You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone". That sort of attitude represents an offence.

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Subhuti: It just seems to go completely against the grain of our way of looking at things by and large. You tend to think in a rather individualistic way that as long as you don't actually harm anybody, overtly harm anybody, your actions are your own. You can't be ...

S: But it was made clear to Bhaddali that his action might indeed harm in fact the whole Order. Because he isn't in a sense an individual on his own - he's an individual who is part of an Order.

Prasannasiddhi: This relates back to not realizing the full implications of your actions. Your actions are going to have implications even on a vast scale. You hold the reputation for the sangha and that could have an effect on a world-wide scale.

S: So that suggests it's very important to be clear in one's own mind what you're supposed to do and what you're not supposed to do. I mean this is why we have things like the Order briefing so to speak, after the ordinations. To explain what are the implications of the step one has taken, this is what it amounts to.

Prasannasiddhi: And always continually realizing the stronger implications. It's also interesting that they do actually decide they're not going to settle the matter quickly. So if sort of they want to settle the matter in a positive sort of light.

S: Yes, it's more important to settle it positively than to settle it quickly. If it can be settled quickly well and good - that's made clear in the next paragraph. But if it can't be settled quickly well it's better just to delay things, to take more time and to settle it in the end in a satisfactory manner.

Prasannasiddhi: They do want these people in.

S: Yes, they don't want to make things more difficult, they don't want to lose him, as it were. They want to keep him, they want to help him come back on to the right path so they're

prepared to delay matters to make that possible.

Subhuti: Another thing that is quite striking is that in order to say "What can I do to please the Order" you've got to trust the Order to quite a substantial degree.

S: Well, you've got to think that the Order is worth pleasing. and that implies the element of Metta, you don't try to please people for whom you have no Metta. I mean, the fact that you try to please them is an expression of your Metta. If it's genuine Metta well you'll try to please them in a skilful way. If for instance, they're observing a vow of celibacy you won't be able to please them by giving them a book in the form of the works of Rabelais! [pause]. Let's go on to the other possibility. Next paragraph.

Kevala: "He, on being spoken to by the monks does not shelve the question by asking another, he does not answer off the point, he does not evince anger and ill-will and discontent, he conducts himself properly, is subdued, mends his ways and he says: "What can I do to please the Order?" Therefore Bhaddali, it occurs to the monks: "This monk, your reverences, is a constant offender .. and he says "What call I do to please the Order?" It were good if the venerable ones were to investigate this monk in such a way [75] that this legal question of his should be settled quickly." So Bhaddali the monks investigate this monk in such a way that this legal question of his is settled quickly.

S: So here's the opposite kind of case. Someone is a constant offender, full of offences but when he is spoken to by the other monk he does not merely react. He does not merely react in the different ways described. Do you think this is an actual possibility, that someone should be a constant offender full of offences but not actually react when he's spoken to? What sort of person would that be?

Subhuti: I suppose someone who's in the condition that we've already talked about, seeing what's right but not quite capable of keeping it up.

S: He might have been an offender, full of offences out of sheer unmindfulness, not realizing what he was doing. Also he may be sort of quite good-natured, it does occur to me that you could say that the first type of person is more likely to be a hate type and the second type more likely to be a greed type. So inasmuch as he doesn't react when the monks speak to him the monks are inclined to settle whatever legal question of his it is quickly. [pause]

Prasannasiddhi: Is there some significance in the settling of it quickly. Or do you think it's the extremes of words ...

S: No, I think really the quicker the better because if someone has committed an offence maybe it's an offence that puts him temporarily outside the Order, maybe it requires some definite action, well the sooner it's settled, the sooner he makes satisfaction, so to speak, the sooner he's back into full membership of the Order, so to speak, the better.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose you could say that for the previous person as well, the sooner he's back in the Order the better.

S: Yes but in his case sooner means a long time. Just on account of his reactivity. It's going to take a long time. In the case of the person who is not so reactive it can all be done much more

quickly, even though it is basically the same question. They may have committed exactly the same offences but it's much easier to deal with the non-reactive person than the reactive person. To deal with the reactive person may take a much longer time, will take a much longer time. One has to proceed much more carefully, much more cautiously so as not to make matters worse. And the monks won't want to do that. I mean, for instance, supposing in the first case someone shelves the question, answers off the point, well, he's not even accepting that he's committed offences. First he's got to be brought to the point where he admits he has committed offences, that's going to take a long time perhaps. In the second case the monk concerned makes no attempt to do that, he is in effect admitting that he has committed offences, that's much more easy to deal with. He's much more amenable, he's in a much more receptive frame of mind.

Prasannasiddhi: You get the impression of his eagerness to get on with things but at the same time he's making lots of mistakes.

S. Could be.

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Prasannasiddhi: It says at the beginning he's a constant offender, full of offences.[pause]

S: Right two other possibilities are then considered. Let's read those next two paragraphs together. The last paragraph on page 114 and the paragraph after that on the next page.

Kovida: "Then. Bhaddali, some monk here is an occasional offender, he is not full of offences. But he, on being spoken to by the monks shelves the question by asking another, he answers off the point, he evinces anger and ill-will and discontent, he does not conduct himself properly, is not subdued, does not mend his ways and he does not say: "What can I do to please the Order?" Therefore, Bhaddali, it occurs to the monks: "This monk, your reverences, in an occasional offender, he is not full of offences ... he does not say "What can I do to please the Order?" It were good if the venerable ones were to investigate this monk in such a way that this legal question of his should not be settled quickly.

But, Bhaddali, some monk is an occasional offender, he is not full of offences, He, on being spoken to by the monks does not shelve the question by asking another, he does not answer off the point, he does not evince anger and ill-will and discontent, he conducts himself properly, is subdued, mends his ways, and he says: "What can I do to please the Order?" Therefore, Bhaddali it occurs to the monks: "This monk your reverences, is an occasional offender, he is not full of offences ... he says: "What can I do to please the Order?" It were good if the venerable ones were to investigate this monk in such a way that this legal question of his should be settled quickly." So, Bhaddali, the monks investigate this monk in such a way that this legal question of his is settled quickly."

S: So the same two alternatives, the same reactions from different monks but in respect of being taken to task for occasional offences. You know not for a number of offences. But even here, even if someone is being taken to task for just an occasional offence, if he reacts strongly then it's better to take time over settling the matter. And similarly if he doesn't react in that sort of way, well, less time can be spent over it. But the principle seems to be the same. If people react strongly when they're being taken to task there's no question of the matter being settled quickly. You have to allow enough time to do it properly and bring it to a

positive conclusion. Sometimes you see this with people - sometimes there's a bit of misunderstanding or reactivity and then someone says "No, I insist on settling it now, we've got to get to the bottom of it now!" where very often that is not the most skilful way of dealing with the matter. It's making it worse sometimes. So that sort of insistence on settling it now sometimes doesn't show a real desire to settle the matter but only is a ...

Subhuti: Retribution.

S: Yes indeed, yes. If you were genuinely concerned about settling the matter you would see that, well it can't be settled quickly, the other person's got to be given time to calm down and see things more objectively.[pause]

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Prasannasiddhi: In all cases the Order is doing their best, making the best of each situation.

S: Yes, yes. Also it's probably to be noted that even occasional offences are not overlooked. It's not that 'he's only an occasional offender we need not bother'. I mean even that is given attention.

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps this sort of represents the spiritual community as it should be.

S: Well yes, no doubt it does. But there's an exception. Which is dealt with in the next paragraph. Perhaps we had better go on to that because that raises a quite important and in a way new point.

Subhuti: "In this connection, Bhaddali, some monk is going along with only a little faith, with only a little regard. Therefore, Bhaddali, it occurs to the monks: "This reverend monk is going along with only a little faith, only a little regard. If we constantly take action against this monk, be careful lest even that little faith of his, even that little regard, deteriorate". Bhaddali, it is like a man with only one eye - his friends and acquaintances, his kith and kin would take care of that one eye so that that one eye of his did not deteriorate, thinking: "Take care lest that one eye of his deteriorates". Even so, Bhaddali, some monk goes along with only a little faith, only a little regard. Therefore, Bhaddali, it occurs to the monks: "This reverend monk is going along with only a little faith ... be careful lest even that little faith of his, even that little regard, deteriorate."

S: So it's not that one should even take action every time. If by taking action constantly you are going to lose that person then you should be very, very careful. Not that you could ignore the matter indefinitely but at least you shouldn't constantly and repeatedly take action against him for offences even when that would be justified if by so doing you would reduce whatever little faith and regard he still has left. And thereby cause him to be completely alienated from the Order. So there's no question of a merely legalistic attitude or merely legalistic procedure. I mean the overriding concern is that the person concerned should be brought back on to the right path and as it were reinstated as a fully functioning member of the Order.

Prasannasiddhi: That's sort of being emphasized, it's not just a sort of ... it's based on a ...

S: On metta, you could say, not on vindictiveness. Or just some abstract ideal of justice.  
[pause].

Subhuti: Pema is translated as affection of regard. Does this imply that pema has a more positive meaning than ... [unclear]

S: I'm not sure. It could imply two things. One, that the word pema is used loosely or ambiguously in Pali but the other that it could suggest that the monk in question is connected with the Order only by pema, only by a sort of group feeling or group affection. But even that as it were shouldn't be disturbed if it's that which is keeping him in touch. Because saddha is clearly more positive whereas pema is something as it were I won't say less positive, but in a way more [78] worldly, more group-like, more group oriented. Even that should not be strained, should not be put under too great a strain, yes? Let's see what the dictionary says about pema, perhaps it isn't always used in the negative sense. Pema, love affection. Clearly in many cases pema is contrasted with metta. You could say that saddha refers to superiors as it were, pema like metta refers to equals - it could be his fellow-feeling for the other monks. His feeling of solidarity with them. Even his affection for them in the ordinary way, human sort of way. I mean if they're constantly taking action against him then he won't feel very positively towards them. Even if they're taking action with some justification. So this also suggests it's not always it's not, what shall I say, not always a question of it, that one is in the right, in a sort of technical sense. Someone sometimes one can't act upon the fact that one is in the right. I mean no doubt if the monks have constantly taken action against someone who was constantly offending they'd be in the right in so doing. But to be in the right is not enough. Then there's human considerations which also enter into the matter. [pause] In other words, it already the link which is connecting the monk concerned with the sangha is quite thin or quite frail one just has to be careful not to make it thinner and frailer still, even though what one, you know, was doing in a sense is justified. [pause]

Then the Buddha summarizes the matter by saying "This, Bhaddali, is the cause, this the reason why they constantly take action against some monks here. But, Bhaddali, this is the cause, this the reason why they do not constantly take similar action against some other monk here." So here a general point which emerges is that the individual case has to be considered, there's no question of the blanket application of rules.

Subhuti: No question of fairness.

S: No question of fairness, yes. In a sense no question of justice. In the rigid sense. No question of democracy, one might say. There's no question of sauce for the goose being sauce for the gander.

Subhuti: Quite an extraordinary revelation of the atmosphere of the sangha, or at least what was expected.

S: Yes, a very human sort of atmosphere, one might say. Very considerate. Even if this does represent a compilation after the time of the Buddha. It could well be, especially in view of what is going to come later on, which we will have to deal with next week, but even so in that case it would be even more striking that even after the time of the Buddha this sort of spirit was there, in the sangha. In other words, it's as though the monks are not concerned or not to be concerned with just being in the right, that is not enough. [pause] I think that's as far as we can go today, there's a big new question arises next, which in a way is the main question in the Sutta. [Long pause].

Subhuti: Is there anywhere in the Pali Canon where there's a discussion of Justice?

S: Not in the abstract, no I think that was a Greek concept. I don't think so. There's the word 'Dhamma' - Dhamma itself does involve some aspects of Justice. It is in some ways an interesting question, how what the Greeks knew as justice wasn't known or didn't arise within the Indian context.

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Subhuti: Justice is blind.

S: That also yes. Here justice is not blind. This whole idea of impartiality, equality before the law which, I mean it doesn't actually happen, as the rich and the poor are certainly not equal before the law because the rich can afford the best lawyers and the poor can't. This is perhaps a bit controversial but it occurred to me some time ago that there was a discussion about the law of evidence in rape cases and apparently it was ruled to be irrelevant that a woman is of bad character. But that seems to me to be very relevant indeed. You don't just take two women and ignore their entire past history and decide without reference to that. It would seem to me that if a woman was so to speak of bad character well that is highly relevant when someone is being tried with the offence of raping her. So here justice is so abstract, as it were, it's almost no longer justice. And also the question, another question which is relevant is what is your overall objective? Here the overall objective is not the abstract administration of justice but the well-being of the individual and of the sangha as a whole. We're clearly not just concerned to punish. That isn't a consideration at all.

Subhuti: Do you know how early on this somewhat legalistic framework of the sangha developed?

S: It's very difficult to tell. It does seem probably it started even towards the end of the Buddha's own life. It seems the Buddha had a sort of model in the constitution or rules of procedure of the Republican assemblies of his time. Anyway let's leave it there for this week and then next week we've got in effect the question of why there are now many rules but few Arhants whereas before there were many Arhants but few rules.

END OF TAPE

[80]

S: Maybe you could just recap the main themes of the last few weeks. Do you think you could do that, just very briefly, just in a few minutes.

Subhuti: We start off with Bhaddali refusing to carry out a rule that the Buddha lays down concerning eating at one sitting, and we decided that his reason for not carrying this out was basically a lack of receptivity, rather than that he was genuinely incapable. He didn't want to rather than that he couldn't. (unclear) After a while the Buddha is going away on a walking tour for three months, and some monks, when Bhaddali approaches them, point out to him that this is an excellent opportunity for him to re-establish connection with the Buddha. So he goes to the Buddha, confesses what he's done, confesses his transgressions, and the Buddha sort of spells out in full the implications of this failure to carry out his instructions, the first of these being that if you have a reputation within the Order for not carrying out the teacher's instructions, but then not just within the Order, amongst others connected with it, even other

wanderers attached to other sects, who come to know of it. And then the Buddha goes on to say that somebody who was an Aryan, was spiritually attained, would have just carried out the Buddha's instructions without questioning at all, and this is proof that Bhaddali had no spiritual attainment. The final upbraiding that the Buddha gives him is, somebody who wasn't carrying out the teacher's instructions, who tried to practise meditation, tried to develop insight, just wouldn't be able to. The reason being (unclear) that unless you're in harmony with Buddha and the spiritual friends, then you can't place full confidence in the teaching in which they (unclear) following. So you can't make progress. Then Bhaddali asks why some monks are constant offenders but aren't upbraided by the monks, while on the other hand there are some monks who are constant offenders, are upbraided. And the Buddha says that in effect that there are some monks who have little faith and little regard and so if you approach them in the wrong kind of way, too abruptly, they'll react. And so the monks, whenever they're dealing with these sort of people, are very careful, and they're concerned not to just resolve the matter (unclear) just to come to the punishment, as it were, they're concerned to help them through it, to see their own faults and not just to get the matter legally cleared up. They're concerned about them as individuals.

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S: So really what has gone before falls into two parts, doesn't it? That is to say, the actual refusal on Bhaddali's part to comply with the Buddha's instructions and what follows from that right up to his having cleared the matter. He puts his first question as it were to the Buddha. So part two begins with that question of his of about why the Sangha treats different monks in different ways and then part three begins here today. And it begins with another question by Bhaddali.

[82]

Text: "What is the cause, Revered Sir, what the reason why there were formerly fewer rules of training but more monks who were established in profound knowledge? And what is the cause, Revered Sir, what the reason why there are now more rules of training but fewer monks who are established in profound knowledge?"

S: Maybe before we go in to this it's best to clear up what the actual terms are in Pali - the two key words here, that is to say "a rule of training" is again Sikkhapada. It's the same word that one has in the Precepts, where one says "Panatipata Veramani Sikkhapadam". So this "Sikkha" as I explained before is like training or even education. "Pada" is more like precept, principle, rule, factor. It's all those things. So it's a principle of training or even item of training. Rules doesn't really quite convey the Pali "Pada". (Pause.) It would, as I said, I think last time, it would be better to render it as element of training rather than - or elements of training rather than rules. The word rules has all the wrong sort of connotations. And then the word which is translated as profound knowledge is Anna. Anna. That is in Pali. In Sanskrit it is Ajna, both a's long. In Pali only the second a is long. In both languages the n is n with a little wavy line over it. In Pali there are two of those n's. Anna in Pali, Ajna in Sanskrit. So this word Anna occurs quite frequently in the Pali texts, especially in those strata of them which seem to be relatively early. And anna is the full or complete spiritual knowledge of the Arhant. It always means that. (Pause.) So to say that "more monks who were established in profound knowledge" is tantamount to saying more monks were Arhants or had attained Arhantship. Etymologically Anna is, of course, connected with Panna, and Nyana. They are all from the same root, Nya, meaning to know.



Subhuti: Do you know actually what the etymology is - how the a works?

S: The dictionary I'm afraid doesn't say anything. (Pause whilst he looks it up.) No, the dictionary doesn't help us I'm afraid. It does say that the Sanskrit is a plus jna, but why the a should be added it doesn't explain. It could be simply an emphatic prefix. It could be simply that. Like Pra, Prajna. (Pause.) See whether it says anything under the long a, as a prefix. (Pause.) a as a prefix can mean 'to' or 'towards' but also 'from'. (Pause.) Yes, intensive frequentative. Something in a sense all round, completely, very much. It is probably that. Yes it is probably to be taken as an emphatic prefix. Emphasizing the meaning of the word succeeding. So it says therefore, "What is the cause, Revered Sir, what the reason why there were formerly fewer Sikkhapadas but more monks who were established in anna. And what is the cause, Revered Sir, what is the reason why there are now more rules of training, Sikkhapada, but fewer monks who are established in profound knowledge, anna. So there is the suggestion or the implication, in as much as Bhaddali says formerly, there is a [83] sort of suggestion or implication that the Buddha's teaching has been current for some time. It is difficult to say for exactly how long, but it certainly isn't new. But I mean, definitely a certain period of time has elapsed since the Buddha started teaching, so that Bhaddali can speak in terms of then and now. Maybe at least fifteen to twenty years one would have to posit.

Prasannasiddhi: Presumably within the Buddha's lifetime the number of monks who were established in profound knowledge would have increased throughout the Buddha's life time. This implies that at one stage there were lots of monks and few rules, and that now there is less monks than there were then, but ...

S: No it's also that there were formerly, there were, there were fewer rules. I mean that's a straightforward numerical comparison. If say there are a hundred now, well then, perhaps there were ten. But in the case of the monks the comparison is either with the actual number of monks then and now, or percentage, proportion. I mean, it could be that, well, then there were only ten rules but there were a hundred Arhant bhikkhus, but now there are say a hundred rules but only ten Arhant bhikkhus. It could be that. Or it could be that then there were only ten monks but they were all Arhants. Now there are ten thousand monks but only half of them are Arhants. It could be taken in either sense. Either with regard to absolute number or proportion. But in any case there is a sort of deterioration. The general picture is of more Sikkhapadas, more rules, and fewer, either absolutely or proportionately, people who have actually gained Arhantship. (Pause.) Anyway that is Bhaddali's question. So let's see that the Buddha has to say. Maybe let's read that next paragraph right the way through, beginning on the next page.

Text: "It is thus Bhaddali. When beings are deteriorating, when true Dhamma is vanishing away there are more rules of training and fewer monks established in profound knowledge. Not until some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order, does the Teacher, Bhaddali, lay down the rule of training for disciples. But when, Bhaddali, some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order, then the Teacher lays down a rule of training for disciples so as to ward off those very conditions which cause cankers. Not until the Order has arrived at Greatness, Bhaddali, do some conditions which will cause cankers appear here in the Order. But when, Bhaddali, the Order has arrived at greatness. then some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order, and then the teacher lays down a rule of training for disciples so as to ward off those very conditions which cause cankers. Not until

the Order has arrived at the height of gain, Bhaddali etc., etc., or at the height of fame or at much learning, or at long standing, Bhaddali, do some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order. But when, Bhaddali, the Order has arrived at the height of gain, the height of fame, much learning or long standing, then some conditions which cause cankers appear in the Order and [84] then the teacher lays down a rule of training for disciples so as to ward off those very conditions that cause cankers."

S: So, first of all about the Buddha's reply generally. One does get the impression of quite a long period of time being involved. So this makes one wonder, one can't help wondering whether, I mean, this passage actually was spoken by the Buddha, or whether it was, so to speak, put into his mouth some time after the Parinirvana because the Buddha is speaking to begin with very generally - "When beings are deteriorating. When true Dharma is vanishing away." I mean this almost recalls the words of Vasubandhu, centuries later.

Voice: What's that?

S.: "About the flood of worldliness having overwhelmed the Dharma." Conze quotes those lines.

Voice: When was that?

S: That would have been about fourth to fifth century AD. That is about 800 or 900 years after the Buddha. This couldn't be as late as that, but one does get the impression of quite a long period of time having elapsed.

Subhuti: Is that necessarily the case? Isn't he simply stating a general principle which applies specifically in this circumstance? He's saying that generally when there is deterioration there are more rules, that's why there are more rules now.

S: But that suggests there has been a deterioration, that beings formerly were not deteriorating. The true Dharma was being preached. And it's as though the whole Movement, the Buddha's Movement, has reached its peak and has now started deteriorating. That seems to be the suggestion. So one wonders, you know, whether that actually did happen within his life-time or whether the deterioration didn't start after his death. It's difficult to say. It could have started during his life time. I suppose that isn't impossible.

Kevala: It doesn't sound like deterioration, does it. Because he's saying, he's saying "greatness" - "when the Sangha has reached greatness".

S: Ah, I think greatness is here used in the sense of size simply, numerical greatness.

Kevala: But he also says how to gain, gain ...

S: But that ... but all this suggests a long period of time. That it has become [85] very big, very famous, with many possessions. So this is why I'm just questioning. One can't do more than that because it's all hypothetical whether this passage does originate with the Buddha himself or whether it did originate after. We can't really know for sure. It would seem ... but no doubt the general principles involved are quite correct. So anyway, "When beings are deteriorating." See if I can see what word is used for deteriorating. (Pause whilst he looks it

up.) Hiya mana - Hiyati - from the verb hiyati - to be left behind, to diminish, dwindle, waste away, disappear. It is the past participle of a word which means 'to be left behind'. That's quite straightforward. Also, yes it's the true Dhamma, the Saddhamma. But anyway, the Buddha, if it is the Buddha, goes on to explain why this is, that there are more rules of training and fewer monks established in profound knowledge when beings are deteriorating etc. "Not until some conditions which cause cankers appear in the Order does the teacher, Bhaddali, lay down a rule of training for disciples." The word for cankers is asavas, of course. So, I mean, here the Buddha is clearly saying that rules are not, as it were, propounded, rules are not drawn up in advance. They are only laid down as necessary. They are only laid down to correct some definite abuse. To restrain some definite misbehaviour. So the fact that a number of rules have been laid down means that there have been many instances of misbehaviour and therefore, this deterioration has taken place, "But when, Bhaddali, some conditions which cause cankers appear in the Order that the teacher lays down a rule of training for disciples so as to ward off those very conditions that cause cankers." In other words the Buddha doesn't see himself as a sort of legislator laying down rules in advance. Or framing a constitution for the Sangha in advance. The Buddha only teaches the Dharma. He makes known certain principles. So long as those principles are being followed he doesn't lay down any rules. But when those principles are not being followed properly, when in fact they are being infringed, when as he says, "conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order" only then he lays down these rules or Sikkhapadas. (Pause.) So what are the implications of that? (Pause.)

Voice: There are a lot of rules.

S: No, it didn't mean that.

Subhuti: Well, principles come first.

S: Mmm. Yes.

Subhuti: It's the crucial point.

S: Well it's almost as though one should hold off laying down rules for as long as possible. (pause) But also an implication is that if cankers appear rules have to be laid down. (pause)

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Subhuti: Can you go a bit more about what is meant by sikkhapada? It is not a rule we say, but why - in what sense is it not a rule?

S: Well, perhaps one had better explore first what is meant by a rule. Maybe we had better look at the dictionary. See what the dictionary says. See what, I think it's volume three up there. No, not the little one. Yes. Which one?

Subhuti: It's from regular which is connected with reigning - kingship. (Pause.)

Voice: It's a prescribed guide for conduct or action, governing direction. An authoritative enactment, a regulation, a prescription, a precept."

S: Does it give the etymology?

Subhuti: Latin 'regular, ruler, rule, model. To lead straight, to direct'. Do you want more?

S: I think that's enough. You mentioned the connection with rex - king. Is that established? Because if it is it is quite important. (Pause.)

Subhuti: Yes. Regular is from the root reg isn't it? Which is to rule - rule is connected with rex.

S: So that would go along to a great extent with the actual definitions because the crux of the matter is that a rule is something laid down authoritatively in the sense of laid down by someone with superior force - who is in a position to compel you to comply with the rule. Do you see what I mean? This will seem that etymologically 'rule' therefore suggests something which is laid down and enforced. So in that sense, I mean would it appear that Sikkhapadam can be translated as rule?

Voice: No.

S: No, because it's, I mean, it's not something that the Buddha as it were enforces, not in the literal sense. I mean, a ruler, a king can make a rule, is what we call a law, and you're obliged to obey that. You can't refuse. Or if you do, well, you suffer the consequences. Or you can be compelled to obey.

Voice: Isn't consequences something separate from rule?

S: Mmm?

Voice: The actual definition of rule doesn't necessarily include consequences.

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S.: Well, yes, because if a king enacts a rule, or that is to say, a law, the fact that he does so implies that if one disobeys well one is going to suffer punishment. And usually when a law is made the punishment for disobeying the law is prescribed at the same time. The penalty is prescribed at the same time.

Sthirananda: But that doesn't seem to tie in somehow with its original meaning, its root. Like its original meaning is to be straight, or to direct. So it doesn't seem to have any connotation of any consequence.

S: Ah, but it is who directs, who leads straight. It's the king, by means of his enactment, his rule.

Sthirananda: Yes, but isn't that just one context?

S: Mmm?

Sthirananda: Isn't that just one context of the use of the word in terms of the rule and ruler?

S: But that's the original context, that's the etymology. So therefore, even though subsequently the word has been modified in various ways according to context, it retains that sort of

connotation of coercion. This is the point I'm getting at. I mean, for instance, supposing you have a club. A club has rules. If you don't obey the rules of the club, well, you are expelled. Do you see what I mean? So what we are going into is whether initially a Sikkhapadam is a rule, in the general sense of the term rule. But rule as suggested by its general meaning, and especially by its etymology, seems to mean something which is enforced. Something which is enacted by someone with power to compel obedience or compliance. So clearly a Sikkhapadam is not that. So if it isn't that, what is it?

Voice: If it is not a rule that is based on power then you could say it's a rule that's based on, if you want to obtain certain results, then you follow that guide.

S: In that sense it's a prescription. But anyway, that isn't quite what I was thinking of. It's the Buddha speaks in terms of "beings deteriorating and true Dhamma vanishing away". You notice he speaks of the "beings deteriorating" but not as the true Dhamma deteriorating, but of "vanishing away" because the Dhamma itself cannot deteriorate but it can certainly vanish, in the sense that people are no longer practising it, so it is no longer visible in the world in their behaviour. So what is this Dhamma. I mean, the Dhamma, or the true Dhamma, the [88] Saddhamma one can say, comprises certain principles - certain, well general principles, even, one might say. So then the question arises, well, what is the relation between the Dhamma, or the Saddhamma and the Sikkhapadam? I mean, that is really the point.

Subhuti: Is the Sikkhapadam, is the, are the working out of those general principles in specific details?

S: Yes, in specific details, in specific ways. Even in specific contexts. So, someone may quite sincerely, even wholeheartedly accept the general principle, accept the Saddhamma, but he may not always see exactly how it is to be applied, in detail, or worked out in detail and he may not even realize that what he is doing represents an infringement of the principle which he does, in fact, accept. So the Sikkhapadam is laid down to make that clear. Now, for instance, see if I can think of a few examples. Supposing one takes the Sikkhapadam of, well, of Adinnadana. Not taking the not-given. This isn't an actual example that I've read anywhere but one can imagine it going, say, something like this. The general principle is that one should not take what is not given. Or that one should not steal. But one might not include in that just helping oneself to something that just happens to be by lying around, Or picking up something that had fallen off the back of a lorry. So then a specific Sikkhapada has to be laid down, to make it clear that if in fact you do that, if you do just pick up something that happened to be lying around, you are, in fact, infringing that general principle of not committing adinnadana. Do you see what I mean? So it means that the Sikkhapadam is laid down, or comes into operation only when people fail to realize the way in which or the extent to which the general principle, the Saddhamma, should be applied. (Long pause.) I mean there are many instances of this in the Vinaya in connection with the principle of celibacy. I mean the principle of celibacy - Brahmachariya was accepted by all the monks in the Buddha's day. That was to be regarded as an integral part of the Dhamma. But one Monk was under the impression that it did not include, that principle did not include sexual relations with one's own former wife. So the Buddha had to make it clear that what he thought was an exception was not, in fact, an exception. That the principle applied there too. Then another monk, well I don't want to go into too much detail, but another monk, sort of, was under the impression that wives, he understood one should not even associate even with one's own former wife - he thought it didn't apply to female monkey wives. So the Buddha had to make a rule, a sikkhapadam,

making it clear that the principle of a Brahmachariya applied even to female monkey wives Do you see what I mean? So in this way the content of the principle is made clearer and clearer. Do you see what I mean?

Kevala: Wouldn't it be clear to someone like the Buddha that if you were to go on making these principles, eventually there will be so many principles that it would be so difficult to keep?

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S: No. So many precepts or so many Sikkhapadam.

Kevala: I thought that, in a way, would be ...

S: Well, this is the point, in a way. I mean each of the major schools came to halt, historically, with a certain number of precepts. Let's say a certain number of Sikkhapadam. The Theravadin so far as Bhikkhus were concerned, they came to a halt with 227. But one can certainly, faithfully observe those 227 and still not really be leading a spiritual life, or even trying to do so. That is quite possible. I mean as I've seen myself in the East. So, even though the Sikkhapadam, sort of, indicates how the principle is to be applied, simply observing the Sikkhapadam without an understanding of the principle, or without wanting to practise the principle through the observance of the Sikkhapadam, is really quite self-defeating. So, therefore, one cannot make sure that people would practise the principle by laying down a sufficient number of Sikkhapadam to cover all conceivable circumstances. So, therefore, it is a question of just saying where one is going to stop, otherwise one can, in fact, go on indefinitely. And, I mean, this is what is called legalism. That you try to make sure that people follow ethical principles by laying down Sikkhapadam, as they're called here, to cover all conceivable contingencies. But this actually is self-defeating. It doesn't work.

Kevala: Even the 227 are legalistic in the sense that if it was going on, if they were truly abiding by the precept then they wouldn't need any.

S: So one could say that the Sikkhapadam is, sort of, illustrative and suggestive. Not sort of laid down as a rule. In other words, if someone isn't genuinely desirous of observing the principle you can't oblige him to do so by laying down for his benefit any number of rules. He has to want to practise the principle, and to take the Sikkhapadam, the so-called rules, as illustrating the sort of way in which he should do so. But you can't make sure that he will practise the principle by obliging him to observe the rules. Because you can observe all the rules, you can observe all the Sikkhapadam and not realize the spirit of the principle at all. (Pause.) Of course, I mean, one is assuming that one is dealing with what we call individuals. Because in the case of the Sangha, in the case of the Bhikkhu Sangha, after all they had all entered it voluntarily. They had all Gone for Refuge, voluntarily. They'd taken the observance of the Dhamma upon themselves, voluntarily, so one assumes, one has to assume that basic sincerity and the fact they are individuals. If they are not individuals, what people in society who are not individuals; rules, even laws, have to be laid down and enforced. And the enforcing agency doesn't bother much whether you grumble in your heart of hearts against a rule or not. That agency is only concerned with whether you observe the rule. So that is, of course, the level of the group, not the level of the spiritual community. So in the group [90] you have to have rules. You have to have laws which are enforced, otherwise no social life is possible. When I say group I mean the whole mass of people who are not yet individuals, but

within a spiritual community consisting of individuals, there should be only principles, which are illustrated by Sikkhapadams which supply rough and ready guide-lines for those who actually do want to observe the principles, or realize the principles.

Voice: So in that way then, say the Jataka stories would be Sikkhapadams? They are illustrative of ...

S: They illustrate technically so to speak the Paramitas. They show the way in which the Bodhisattva, or the Buddha, when he was a Bodhisattva, observed the ten Paramitas. For instance in one life time, in the Vessantara Jataka, when he was Prince Vessantara, he gave away his wife and children. So this is meant to illustrate the extent to which he practised Dana Paramita. It is not intended to lay down a rule that if one has a wife and children they should be given away whenever anybody asks for them. You see what I mean? The purpose of that Jataka is to illustrate the spirit in which the Bodhisattva practises that particular Paramita, or the way in which, or to the extent to which. Not to lay down a specific rule to be observed by everybody under all circumstances.

Voice: So you could say that they were Sikkhapadams then, could you?

S: You couldn't really say that they were Sikkhapadams in the sense in which the Buddha's using the term here. You could say that they were more like inspiring examples. (Pause.)

: Did then a Sikkhapadam apply to all the Bhikkhus then? Or were they specific cases?

S: Well yes, as the Buddha says here, he doesn't lay down a Sikkhapadam until there is actually a breach of the Dhamma occurring within the Order. I mean he seems to assume that the Bhikkhus, even those who commit these breaches, don't do so deliberately. They do so because they don't realize the extent to which, or the way in which the principles represented by the Dhamma should be applied. For instance, let's say you take this principle of non-violence, Panatipata. Well, it's obvious that it means that you shouldn't take human life. But someone might think, well, if it's a question of battle, war, well, then that's an exception. But no. The Buddha would lay down a Sikkhapadam saying that in the case of the Bhikkhu even in the case of war, he should not take life. Then someone else might think, well, it just covers human life. May just assume that. So the Buddha lays down a Sikkhapadam, that the taking of animal [91] life is also included. Somebody else might think, well, it doesn't involve vegetarianism, so, this didn't actually happen, the Buddha didn't lay down a Sikkhapadam requiring vegetarianism, perhaps because the Bhikkhus were dependent on alms in those days. But the Mahayana, later on, certainly did. So each Sikkhapadam represents a sort of different facet of the principle or Dhamma with which it is connected.

Kevala: A clarification.

S: It clarifies it in terms of actual conduct. What it means in practice. (Pause.) So if the Bhikkhus, if the members of the Sangha are spiritually developed and if they have understanding and insight, well they will know how the principle is to be applied. But if they are failing in insight, they may quite genuinely think that, well, it doesn't matter in this particular case, or it's not to be applied in those particular circumstances. The Buddha then has to intervene and make clear that it is to be applied and explain in what way, exactly how. "So not until some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order does the teacher,

Bhaddali, lay down a rule of training for disciples. But when, Bhaddali, some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order, then the teacher lays down a rule of training for disciples so as to ward off those very conditions which cause cankers."

## SIDE TWO

Subhuti: It's difficult to get back to the original context. As it reaches us it's already become quite legalistic and there's a suggestion of formal processes and so forth. I suppose it is impossible to say but is it a bit as if the Buddha would just be in a situation and simply say "In this case, that's not on." Would he - you get the impression that he promulgated this as something that must be known throughout the Order, you know, there's a list of them. Do you see what I mean? Because, in the course of seminars you make specific statements but we don't sort of learn those off and recite them and see whether we have broken them or not.

S: We don't know, in fact, how the Sikkhapadas laid down by the Buddha from time to time, presumably did circulate within the then existing Order. We don't know that.

Subhuti: He 'laid down' - that has a certain implication. Did he 'lay them down' or did he just comment on a particular incident?

S: He seems to have commented on particular incidents but then his comments seem to have been applied, or have been taken as referring to the Sangha generally. That if Bhikkhu 'A' was not to do that, well Bhikkhu 'B' was not to do that either.

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Voice: But do we know whether or not this wasn't just a later compilation by the people, you know, as these rules, if you like, were passed down. Maybe they gathered the form of rules, rather than - perhaps originally the Buddha just spoke to people and pointed out their mistakes.

S: Well we know that that is what the Buddha did. But that's why I said we don't know the way in which the Sikkhapadas which were laid down in individual cases. We don't know the machinery by means of which they were made generally known. As far as I know there's no reference to that at all. But we do hear of a list of a hundred and fifty - the so-called pratimoksa. But I mean, or rather we do hear of the pratimoksa and later on it seems after the Parinirvana of the Buddha we're told that the pratimoksa consisted of, which means it was then understood to consist of some hundred and fifty Sikkhapadas of various categories. It's very doubtful though whether that, the pratimoksa consisted of those hundred and fifty items during the Buddha's life time. They might possibly have done towards the end but we can't be sure of that. So it would seem that from time to time the Buddha, so to speak, laid down various Sikkhapadas in speaking to individual Bhikkhus. Those Sikkhapadas made clear the way in which, the extent to which, certain principles of the Dharma were to be applied, were to be practised. And that these were, in course of time, as it were, collected and certainly were collected after his Parinirvana and may have been collected before. We can't be more sure than that. Collected in the sense of being drawn up in to a standard, generally accepted list which could be recited from time to time.

Kevala: Presumably the Buddha didn't have a system which he used, I mean for the Sikkhapadas, or anything else, in fact. Systemization probably wasn't even ...



S: Well we have mention of groups of five, groups of eight Sikkhapadas, but they only appear in what seem to be quite late sections of the Canon. There's the so-called five precepts the five Sikkhapadas, are mentioned as a set of five, in that sort of way, in the ... (word unclear) .. but that's quite a late book of the, well as a compilation, it's late, of the Khuddaka Nikaya. We don't find the Buddha even, sort of, giving to lay people, so to speak, the five sikkhapada in the way that they are given in modern times.

Voice: Could be a generally accepted Sikkhapadas which wanderers, people generally know about, which wanderers would follow anyway.

S: Yes but then there were certainly Sikkhapadas or rules let's say which wanderers generally followed and were expected to follow and sometimes it happened that some of the Buddha's disciples, that is to say Bhikkhus, were found not following these, and the lay people complained to the Buddha and then the Buddha laid down a Sikkhapadam [93] to the effect that they should behave in such and such a way. It would seem in some cases this was simply to satisfy public opinion and the ideas which generally people had about the way in which the wanderers should behave.

Subhuti: It would be a bit as if somebody went through all the seminar material, all your seminar material, all your letters and everything that anybody remembered, extracted specific statements of behaviour, arranged them in a list and then recited them.

S: Yes, well that would give one a good general idea of what was to be done and what was not to be done but you couldn't reduce it simply to that and you could imagine someone faithfully observing all those things but missing the spirit of the thing completely.

Sthirananda: But is the spirit of the things, sort of given an example in the ten precepts, or is that just representing a condensation?

S: Well one could say that no precepts, however exhaustive can give the full meaning and full spirit of the thing. You haven't, as it were, caught or encapsulated the spirit when you merely are observing a particular Sikkhapada. But neither can you, of course, capture the spirit without observing Sikkhapadas. Maybe not as Sikkhapadas but just as the way in which you live.

Alaya: I was just imagining someone coming along and following the Buddha whether they would know most of the Sikkhapada that they would be following or would they have to be taken to the side and told about it.

S: Well it would seem that the tradition was that after a Bhikkhu was ordained then the Sikkhapadas were explained to him. He did not know them before hand. In fact, as far as I remember, it was an offence to teach the Vinaya to anyone who hadn't been ordained.

Voice: That seems a bit the wrong way round, doesn't it?

S: In a sense it does. But in a sense maybe not because you're concerned with the spirit, the general principles first. It's only afterwards you're told exactly how they are applied when you've committed yourself. Why explain exactly how the principles are to be practised to someone who hasn't any intention of practising.

Subhuti: It's a bit like our explaining the significance of what an Order Member does after the Ordinations.

S: Yes. Mmm.

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Kovida: The principles are enunciated first.

S: The principles are, of course, enunciated first with varying degrees of comprehension. Some people require a very simple enunciation, of a very general principle. That's enough for them. Others require something much more complicated before they're satisfied. (Pause)

Subhuti: The precepts are - the five precepts or the ten precepts are Sikkhapadas. I suppose you can have varying degrees of generality of Sikkhapada. The principle itself in a sense can't be formulated.

S: Can't be fully formulated.

Subhuti: So the ten precepts are the most general.

S: Yes, the ten that we observe, they are not strictly speaking Sikkhapadas but Kusala-Dhammas. They are more of the nature of principles, therefore than of Sikkhapadas or precepts. For instance, that is especially the case with the last three. Especially if you speak of miccha - well you just have the general principle of abstaining from false views, but it gives you no idea at all what exactly false views are or in what false views consist. And what about abstaining from greed and hatred. Well they are very good as general principles but exactly how do you do that. The others are admittedly more specific. (Pause.) Though not completely so. I mean if you take even Panatipata. Well what - anyway breathing things it means literally. And Panatipata Veramani - it's abstention from injury to breathing beings. So, I mean, what is injury. Non-injury. That's a very broad principle. And even breathing beings - does it include plants, because plants breathe. That would need to be elucidated and presumably Sikkhapada, sort of laid down, so to speak which made those points clear. But the ten precepts as we call them, as we call them in the Order, these are more of the nature of principles than of rules. They are Kusala-Dharmas strictly speaking rather than Sikkhapadas. Even though we have as it were edited them in that way and we say Sikkhapadam Samadiyami. But they are strictly speaking, more of the nature of principles. Or if they are precepts they are precepts of a very broad nature. They indicate very broad areas of application. They don't go much into detail.

Prasannasiddhi: The five precepts?

S: Well the five of course coincide with the first five of the ten. And they are called, as five Sikkhapadas. Yes.

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Prasannasiddhi: So you say the ten are more of the nature of principles. But are the five also, more in the nature of principles?

S: One could say that they are. I mean, in as much as they are, in fact, quite general. Well, for instance, you see, in the five you've got Musavada, which is false speech. You could even say

wrong speech. But then, in the case of the ten precepts, I mean that becomes four - not only false speech, but harsh etc., etc. So it's as though the principle has been made still more clear. That wrong speech doesn't just involve not telling falsehoods but it involves even not speaking harshly. Even involves not back-biting. Even involves not gossiping. I mean that might not have occurred to quite a lot of people, that Right Speech involved not gossiping.

Kevala: I'm still not quite clear here. Are you saying that no Sikkhapada would be given to people before Ordination? Or are you saying the five precepts, in the sense that they are general principles would be explained to some people before Ordination?

S: Well in modern times the situation is quite different because you can't prevent people knowing things, even before they are ready or even before they are meant to. Anybody can just read the whole Vinaya Pitaka through anyway, and find out all about the 227 rules for the Bhikkhus even though they've no intention of ever taking that sort of step.

Kevala: So in other words originally there were no precepts at all before Ordination?

S: In the case of the Bhikkhus what became the detailed list of 220 precepts were not explained before Ordination. No. No. and that is still the practice. They are not officially explained. Of course nowadays in Buddhist countries those who become Bhikkhus usually know them. Or at least they've got a rough idea. And they also know them by seeing how the monks behave. They know they don't do this and they don't do that. But they are not, even now, officially explained until after Ordination. (Pause.)

Prasannasiddhi: It's sort of like you accept the principle. It's like you have .. you accept the vision in a way and then you sort of ...

S: And then you're told what it implies in practice. I mean if you don't accept the vision or the principle to begin with, well there's not much point in explaining to you, how to practise it in detail.

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Kevala: Then how was the vision explained to people if they were not told about the precepts?

S: Well, the vision, one can say, is represented by the Dharma. (Pause.)

Kevala: A Bhikkhu say would give a teaching to people and whatever that, whatever vision he was communicating ...

S: Well, the Dharma as it were holds up a sort of ideal. What is the ideal state of affairs. I mean, the Dharma speaks in terms of Nirvana. Or it speaks in terms of the higher spiritual path. Or it speaks in terms of metta. Or it speaks in terms of Prajna. I mean, those are the general principles. Those are the ideals. But then how to realize that? How to put that into practice? Then the Vinaya comes in. The Sikkhapadas come in, and explains how those principles are to be practised in such a way that they become realized. (Pause.)

Kevala: So, first of all people's appetites for the vision would be whetted and then later would come the instruction of how to attain that.

S: Yes. Yes. The Dharma as consisting of principles represents more like the vision of the goal. Or even the path in very general terms. And the Vinaya, the Sikkhapadas represent the specific steps or the specific concrete things one has to do in order to realize that or embody that, or achieve that. (Pause.)

Prasannasiddhi: And, could you say, perhaps, that those sort of specific rules would apply more, or could apply more to the specific situation in which they were laid down rather than like, perhaps, some rules ...

S: Sometimes they could, no doubt. (Pause.) I mean, there's a famous example of a greedy nun who was told by a lay supporter that she could help herself to garlic from his garden. So she helped herself to such an extent that she absolutely denuded that little garlic plot. He complained to the Buddha so the Buddha, so we're told, prohibited garlic to nuns. So that the garlic became prohibited to nuns for ever and ever. But one could say, well, why should not another nun who is quite discreet in her use of garlic, has never done that sort of thing, why should she not be allowed to take garlic. It would seem to apply just to that nun or at least that kind of nun. Though there is a theory among the Theravadins that the Buddha was sort of just waiting for an opportunity to make the rule. And just took his opportunity when it came. But that doesn't seem to imply sort of, in a way, a very spiritual view of the Buddha himself. (Long pause.)

Subhuti: What is the word for 'lay down'?

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S: Well, this is a word that I've been using. The Buddha, I don't think ...

Subhuti: Yes, it's used in the text.

S: Is it? Where is that?

Subhuti: About five lines - six lines down - 'Lay down a rule of training for disciples'.

S: Ah. Where is that?

Subhuti: Page 116.

S: Ah. 'lay down a rule' - let me see what that is. Could be, I think it's actually 'make known'. Let me see. (Pause whilst he looks it up) Panyapet (?) It's more like 'make known'. I'll check that. (Pause.)

: Lay down has the connotation of a false ruler.

S: (Long pause.) 'To make known, declare, point out. Appoint. Assign. Recognize. Define. To lay down. Fold out. Spread.' So it means primarily to 'make known' though even in Pali itself it is used in the sense of 'to lay down', in the English sense. But literally it is to make known. I mean the suggestion being if the Buddha just makes it known, well, that's enough. The Bhikkhus will, so to speak, automatically follow it. That they didn't follow it before just out of ignorance.

Prasannasiddhi: So he makes it known, no nuns should eat any garlic at all.

S: Well no. Yes, he makes it known that that is the Sikkhapada. Yes? That the principle involved, in this case, being that of greed and restraint and so on.

Kovida: It would be an interesting exercise for someone to go through the Vinaya and relate it all back to the principle.

S: Yes. Where that could be done. (Long pause.)

: Surprised then you wouldn't get contradictions.

S: Also, it must be pointed out that the Buddha himself modified some rulings, so to speak, from time to time. In fact there were certain Sikkhapadas which were modified a number of times, especially those with regard to eating or with [98] regard to dress, or the use of medicines. So it was not that the Buddha did not modify existing rulings. He did change according to circumstances. Or modify according to circumstances.

Kevala: Is there any case of him coming out with a ruling which wasn't related to a specific incident?

S: Well yes, this particular one here, at the very beginning, where he simply calls out to the Bhikkhus in saying 'I monks partake of my food at one session. Partaking my food at one session I, monks, am aware of good health and being without illness etc. Come, do you to, monks partake of your food at one session.' But this is quite unusual. This is very much the exception.

Subhuti: We don't even know that for sure, do we? It's just that it's absent, missing. It may be that there was an occasion which just isn't stated.

S: It could be. I think that is unlikely.

Prasannasiddhi: But surely it refers to a general occasion. He's seen ...

S: He's seen what is good for him.

Prasannasiddhi: He's seen what is good for other monks. (Pause.) Maybe he's seen ill monks.

S: But usually in the Vinaya we're given the specific incident, where someone commits an action which is clearly breaking a particular principle and the Buddha makes that clear. Makes it clear that that is a breach of a spiritual principle by laying down, or making known, a Sikkhapadam. In other words, it is what is called in English, case law rather than statute law. In law they distinguish between case law and statute law. Statute law is just a law which is enacted regardless of circumstances. Case law is law which is built up with result of considering specific instances. (Long pause.) Anyway that sort of clears the ground because the Buddha then goes on to explain how and when it is that cankers arise. He says, I mean, he lays down Sikkhapadas only when cankers arise, to counteract them. Then he goes on to say or to explain under what circumstances the cankers themselves arise. So perhaps we had better stop for a cup of tea at this stage and go into that afterwards because that's sort of

self-contained.

[99]

: I was just thinking about it. If morality had been practised in the true sense in terms of the principles of morality as the Buddha (unclear), then there wouldn't have been any need for rules or anything.

S: Well, yes. The Buddha himself didn't observe any rules.

: Yes. The rules and not the canker in a sense represents the falling away from that, in which case then you have to indicate what restraint is needed, to get back to...

S: Yes. You have to indicate in what observance or practice of the principle consists, or rather, you have to indicate that certain forms of behaviour represent a non-observance of the principle. Because it's a sort of tendency of human nature to be always trying to find a way around things; to find a loophole, unfortunately. So sometimes one gets the impression from the Vinaya, the Buddha was sort of plugging up one loophole after another. That some of the bhikkhus, especially a group known as the group of six, were always finding fresh loopholes. That seemed to be their main work and the Buddha was always plugging up the loopholes.

: Who were the group-of six?

S: Oh, they were a famous group - the (Chabhaggiya?) Bhikkhus. There were quite a lot of Vinaya rules made for their benefit. It does seem that perhaps, well, it is possible that there were no actual six bhikkhus during the Buddha's lifetime, but that the six bhikkhus became a group of six, became a sort of almost pretext. They came to represent bad bhikkhus in general for whose benefit the Sangha enacted more and more rules. Or there may have been an original band of six once upon a time. They became credited with more and more breaches of rules, just like certain humorous stories, they tend to attach themselves to specific personalities.

Prasannasiddhi: Six people may be six, groups of six at different (unclear) having to make rules (unclear)

S: But there is in some cases an unintelligent perpetuation of rules by the modern Theravadins, even though circumstances have changed. You know there is a Vinaya rule that in the (Madyadesa?), that is in the middle country that is in Bihar and (Dupi?) where Buddhism was strong during the Buddha's lifetime, for the ordination of a bhikkhu you required ten bhikkhus. But outside that area only five will do. But nowadays they still observe the rule that if the ordination takes place in (Madyadesa?), even though Buddhism hardly exists there now, they still insist on having ten. It seems to me that this is one of the classic examples of literalism and legalism. In Ceylon they can do it with five.

Alaya: But doesn't that happen when you don't have someone who - a teacher who can actually see the principle.

S: Also you know someone whose, say, authority is generally accepted. That is also necessary. Everybody accepted the Buddha's ruling because after all he had started the whole thing. But if Sariputra or Moggallana had laid down a sikkhapadam would it have been

generally accepted?

Subhuti: They sort of clung to that, the rest of them.

Alaya: You're sort of left to fall back on the old reliable books?

[100]

S: No doubt many of the Sikkhapadas were still valid and needed to be practised by everybody concerned, but with an awareness of the principles involved, yes?

: Maybe they were being saved by practising them all rather than having to decide which ones to drop.

S: Yes. You could even go so far as to say that if you're not prepared to break a rule when necessary, you can't even be sure that you're really concerned more with the spirit than the letter. That could no doubt be misunderstood and no doubt people would be willing to misunderstand, but that is actually the position. (Pause). Because one does not necessarily show one's loyalty to the spirit simply by a breach of the letter. That is antinomianism in the strict sense isn't it? One has to steer a middle path between being allegedly so concerned with the spirit that you neglect the letter, and so preoccupied with the letter that you forget all about the spirit. Because what it is, is a sensible observance of the letter in such a way that it really does become an expression of the spirit.

Prasannasiddhi: Was there not some famous teacher, it could have been Confucius, who mentioned how when he was young, he did what he wanted?

S: Yes, it was Confucius.

Prasannasiddhi: And then in his middle age he did either what he was told or...

S: No. He ended up by being able to follow the desires of his heart without having even to bother whether they were right or wrong. He knew that by that time they were bound to be right.

: (Unclear)

S: No. He gives a whole series of six or seven stages. I don't remember them all. But this is in his, in the Analect sayings of Confucius. When I was such and such an age I put myself on the right path and so on, and it goes right through; I reached such and such an age, I think it was 65, I could follow the desires of my heart without fear.

Kevala: Something that puzzles me about the way the Sikkhapadas are worded. It's almost like they invite misuse. Perhaps that's because you can't actually make a rule which covers every circumstance but on the other hand it does seem that the way some of them, for instance, well two things actually - one is that some of them invite misuse or misinterpretation and some of seem a bit too all encompassing like for instance no nuns will eat garlic.

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S: Well that means you can really understand or practice the Sikkhapadam without some reference to the principle. If the Sikkhapadam becomes detached from its relevant principle it ceases to have very much significance. Well, it's a bit like, say, in the Middle Ages in the case of the Church. I mean, heretics were tried by the Church, by the Inquisition, then handed over to the secular authority and the traitor was to be dealt with without shedding their blood, which seemed very kind. But actually what it meant was burning them at the stake. Then I came across another instance of this, I was just looking through the encyclopedia, under the heading Mace. You know that a mace was an instrument, a weapon. I mean it was a stick with a big heavy spiked ball on one end. So this was wielded in battle by bishops, who fought. Because a priest was not supposed to shed blood so he couldn't use a sword. So bishops went into battle with maces, because they only crushed, they only crushed your skull in without shedding your blood. So this is almost a classic example of legalism you could say. You know, the letter of the rule was kept, the spirit presumably was broken.

Sthirananda: That's why it seems to me that rule isn't an appropriate word to use because of its being looked upon as an outside authority.

S: Well, precept is, precept is probably better. If you think of the rule in this sense as rule, well you'll think of it by way of, not only that, but by way of an analogy with rule or law in the legal sense - that it's enough if you just observe the letter, more is not expected of you. I mean you're not expected to steal, you're not expected to take away someone's property. Whether you feel like taking it away or not, well the law doesn't bother. You can feel as much as you like, providing you don't actually act upon that feeling. Do you see what I mean? So as far as the group is concerned, only your external behaviour really matters. But from a spiritual point of view it's your inner attitude which is all important and the external behaviour is significant ethically only to the extent that it represents an attempt to practise a spiritual principle.

Sthirananda: Yes. Like the context of the word rule will change as you ... rule of one's passions. It comes down to oneself again...

S: But even there, I mean, if one took it to mean in the sense of forcibly subduing one's passions, even then it could be misunderstood or misapplied. (Pause) So you could say that, you know, that there are, sort of, three classes of people. You could say that there are those who are not individuals, are not trying to become individuals. Those who are not individuals but who are trying to become individuals. And those who are individuals in the fullest sense. The first, those who are not individuals and not even trying to become individuals, or thinking of becoming individuals, they are what we also call group members. [102] And they have, as it were, to be controlled by means of rules, laws, which are enforced. Then you have those who are not individuals but are trying to become individuals. They are trying to become individuals by practising certain spiritual principles and they accept certain items of training, Sikkhapadas, as means of achieving those principles or realizing those principles and becoming individuals. And then you've got the individuals who just live as individuals and don't even have to think in terms of practising specific Sikkhapadas. Whatever they do is itself a Sikkhapadam. Whatever it happens to be. So one could say that there were these three groups of people, three categories of people. (Pause.) I mean, non-individuals who have to be made to follow rules, individuals who accept rules voluntarily as a means of realizing principles, and individuals who because



they're individuals are putting principles into practice all the time, whatever they do and who do not need rules in any sense. (Long pause.)

Subhuti: So this means that the reason why there are more rules is because there are more of the second variety?

S: Yes. Yes. I mean by very definition the Sangha couldn't involve, include people of the first variety but there was now balance between people of the second category and people of the third. Or rather between people of the third and people of the second. (Pause) In other words, in the early days of Buddhism there tended to be a higher proportion of people of category three, but in the later days, towards perhaps the end of the Buddha's lifetime, a higher proportion of category two, who needed more Sikkhapadams, or in whose benefit Sikkhapadas had to be laid down.

Kevala: Just because there are more of this second type of category, then the Buddha considered that as the Sangha being to some degree corrupt. What was the word he used? Not corrupt.

S: Deteriorated. Yes. Because I mean, because there would be in it a higher percentage of people who were in fact not Arhants. Not full individuals, who still needed the help of rules.

Subhuti: So it wasn't a Sangha in the highest sense?

S: It wasn't the Sangha in the highest sense, no.

Kevala: But the word deteriorating implies, well, I suppose it was a higher quality at the time there were less people.

S: Well, at the very beginning one might say, well not at the very beginning [103] perhaps, but quite near the very beginning, the Sangha consisted of 100% Arhants, I say not at the very beginning because the Sangha began with the five Bhikkhus, you know, in the Deer Park, who of course certainly were not Arhants to begin with. They became so only after three months of exhortation. (Pause.) Anyway, the general principles now should be clear. 'It is thus, Bhaddali, when beings are deteriorating and true Dhamma is vanishing away, there are more rules of training and fewer monks established in profound knowledge. Not until some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order does the teacher, Bhaddali, lay down a rule of training for disciples. But when, Bhaddali, some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order then the teacher lays down a rule of training for disciples so as to ward off those very conditions which cause cankers.'

Subhuti: You could even go one step further and say why did the Sangha become so legalistic? Why did it become ridden by the rules as legal rules? Presumably it was because actually (type three,) type one began to predominate in the Sangha.

S: Yes. Well, we'll be getting on to that now. So then the Buddha says, I mean, then he explains the conditions under which cankers arise. 'Not until the Order has arrived at greatness, Bhaddali, do some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order.' Greatness is mahatta, a considerable size. There is a note on that, which is not really very relevant. (Pause.) For instance, well let's see all these conditions. 'Not until the Order has

arrived at greatness' that is to say, a considerable size, 'do some conditions which cause cankers appear here in the Order.' And then, 'Not until the Order has arrived at the height of gain' labha or prosperity 'at the height of fame, at much learning, at long standing.' So there are five things. So first of all greatness. That is to say, a considerable size. Now we do find that in the time of Asoka the Sangha increased enormously. And this was because it was enjoying the patronage of Asoka. It was enjoying royal support. Life became very easy for Bhikkhus. So we are told that quite a few people, especially Brahmins, who saw the way in which Buddhist Bhikkhus were supported, and they were not being supported because they were not Buddhist Bhikkhus, decided to join the Sangha, just so as to enjoy the Royal support. So the Sangha increased in size enormously, but obviously the, well, qualitatively speaking it deteriorated. (Pause.) But one could that why is it, why should it be, that because it arrives at a considerable size that it has to deteriorate? What exactly is meant by considerable size? The commentary says that when the Order has become large, Mahantabhava then the lodgings do not suffice for the elders, those of middle standing and the newly ordained monks, so conditions causing cankers arise in regard to the lodgings. This seems to be a bit superficial. That there is not enough room for everybody and there's overcrowding. That certainly didn't apply in the time of Asoka because bigger and better monasteries were built.

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Subhuti: Do you think it's that with size that personal contact becomes less, not that it becomes less ...

S: But why should it because size, I mean, you've got not only ten Bhikkhus here and ten there, because you've got ten here, ten there, ten somewhere else. Why within each particular group of ten should contact become less?

Sthirananda: If natural morality is exemplified by the Arhant, isn't it that with a lot more people coming in for various reasons, and not quite (unclear) isn't it that conventional morality in terms of a legalistic approach to rules, in a sense submerge like the ...

S: No, actually the question is in a way deeper than that because how do they get in in the first place? How is it that they are not kept out? You see, that is the real point. How is it that those who are already members of the Sangha, who are already Bhikkhus, fail to keep out those who are joining it just because it has become big and Popular? Do you see what I mean? Because they are not obliged to take everybody who wants to join. So, I mean, how is it that, I mean are they just naive? Perhaps, is it that they don't realize that these people are just after an easy life, and just ordain them and hope for the best?

Subhuti: Was there any process of examination?

S: There certainly was later on because in the days of Nalanda we're told that there were four gate-keepers. And Naropa was a gate-keeper. And they strictly tested everyone who wanted to join Nalanda Maha Vihara. We know that Nalanda was very strict. We know that. Whether that was always the case, earlier on, we don't know. But from what we hear of what happened in Asoka's time, or what is said to have happened, it would seem that the existing Bhikkhus were not as careful about admitting new Bhikkhus as they might have been and that, therefore, the overall level deteriorated. So even though you have become quite big, I mean assuming that standards are still being maintained, those standards need not decline if you are

strict about who you admit. It may be you become big and popular and thousands of people want to join. You don't have to accept everybody.

Kevala: Are you suggesting that's what they started to do? Just accept everyone who wanted.

S: Well, that seems to be the implication because, we do know, for instance, I think it's in the Asoka Vedana, we're told that many Brahmins joined the Order and continued to wear their sacred threads under their Bhikkhus' robes. In other words they still regarded themselves as Brahmins, which was completely against the Buddha's teaching.

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Kevala: Is this something to do with Asoka then, wanting to spread Buddhism as much as possible, perhaps, and things were influenced by him?

S: No. But, well, even if they were and we're not told that they were, they shouldn't have been. I mean, Asoka's behaviour towards the Sangha, as far as we know, was very respectful. He wouldn't have tried, so far as we know, to influence it in any way. And even if he had tried, the Bhikkhus should have taken a firm stand. After all it is for the Bhikkhus to decide who is to be ordained and who is not. I mean, not Asoka. But, of course, sometimes it has happened that powerful kings have insisted on someone being ordained but that's another matter. Asoka seems not to have done that.

Alaya: So it would seem then that Going for Refuge became downgraded to a different level of Going for Refuge, therefore it let a lot more people in.

S: Well, one could say it had not only been downgraded it would seem if anybody joined the Sangha in the days of Asoka mainly, or even entirely for the sake of support, there was no Going for Refuge at all. They merely repeated the words that you had to repeat to get in. I mean, we could say, if we look at it say in terms of our own Movement, supposing it happened that someone left us a lot of money so that at every Order Member could be comfortably supported for the rest of his life; and could do whatever he likes, stay wherever he likes, read whatever he likes, study whatever he likes, we'd have hundreds of people wanting to join. More than at present, certainly, because the news would get round. 'You join that particular movement. You haven't got anything to bother about for the rest of your life. You can do as you please. You can have a nice place to stay and books to read. A happy comfortable life in the Country.' We'd probably get hundreds of people apply. Well, the way it is at present, well, the way people automatically sifted.

Alaya: I was just trying to ... I was trying to work in, in my head the Untouchables and the mass conversion. Maybe it was like the idea of a mass conversion, even though they hadn't as individuals Gone for Refuge, a provisional sense Going for Refuge, in which to allow the conditions for a deeper Going for Refuge to arise later on.

S: You've got to be quite cautious about that because the Buddha certainly gave ordination to people who looked very unpromising. Anyway, the Buddha was there to deal with them. And Sariputra and Moggallana were there. So it could be that with the best of intentions you admit people that you think you could deal with and change, but actually you are not able to do that. (pause) So therefore you have [106] not only to see who

you admit but also, whether you are able to give them what they need.

Sthirananda: Who actually gave ordination? The Bhikkhus gave ordination?

S: In the Buddha's life-time?

Sthirananda: during Asoka's?

S: Oh yes. Well, during the Buddha's life-time, the Buddha himself to begin with - only the Buddha gave ordinations. After a few years he delegated. And he said that, well, a number of rules were made, but in the end it come to, if there were ten Bhikkhus gathered together, with - including at least one Bhikkhu of ten years' standing, then they could on their own responsibility admit someone as a Bhikkhu, without reference to him. And, of course, that system was enforced during the days of Asoka. So that any ten Bhikkhus, and this actually to me, looking back, it seems a weakness. (General agreement.) It was under centralized. But any ten Bhikkhus, with just one Thera among them could admit any number of Bhikkhus to the Order.

Subhuti: So in a sense this is legalistic also, just ten years doesn't guarantee the responsibility that is required.

Alaya: Imagine what if that had happened now.

Sthirananda: It seems like what happened was it ran away with itself in that respect by admitting anybody.

S: Yes. Because even supposing you had in one part of India a group of ten Bhikkhus, well, if, yes, you were Bhikkhus, they'd been ordained. But maybe you've got ten very unsuccessful Bhikkhus, all happened to congregate together, and there happened to be among them one who was of ten years standing. Well they could ordain hundreds and hundreds, quite correctly, quite legally. And then they'd be part of the total Order. So something like that may have happened. There may have been a few chapters as it were, who were very lax and who let in, word may have got around. Well, that particular chapter will ordain you, even if the others won't I mean I'm only hypothesizing, we don't know. But this, it could have happened in that sort of way.

Sthirananda: If that happened it could have paved the way for this legalistic approach to rules and precepts.

S: Yes. Well the legalistic approach is already there because they, as it were, [107] would say, 'Well, there is ten of us and one of us is a Thera, of course we're qualified to admit newcomers' (Pause.)

Prasannasiddhi: So there is the situation running away with them. Sort of getting out of hand. Was that a sort of inevitable thing, or would it have arisen out of, you know, certain ... is this, sort of, something you could almost see building up and which you won't, couldn't, you know something you couldn't sort of spot, in a way. A bit just sort of happened.

S: Well, I Personally think it could have been prevented. It does seem that the Buddha didn't want to centralize things too much, but it seems as though they were too de-centralised. I

mean, some influential Bhikkhus from time to time tried to pull things together, as it were, on their personal authority, but sometimes that authority was accepted, sometimes it wasn't. But under the existing system any ten Bhikkhus could ordain, if they included one of ten years' standing, so that sort of provision does not seem to have been sufficient to stem the process of deterioration. Though again I must say I'm only hypothesizing here. [108] We don't know that it was due to that, but we do know that the Sangha seems to have been flooded by, during Asoka's time, people who didn't really join it for the right reasons. That suggests the existing bhikkhus weren't sufficiently careful about excluding people whose intentions were not sincere.

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps they didn't... perhaps this was the first instance in the history of Buddhism in which this had occurred, so they had no example in this respect.

S: Formally, it could have worked that they just took everybody who presented himself, and yes, he joined, he was sincere and after a few years he became well established on the Path, perhaps they had no experience of hundreds of people flooding in, and especially perhaps people, Brahmins, who deliberately joined just for the sake of a life of... perhaps they had no experience of that. Though again I must say, they ought to have known if they were of any degree of spiritual development themselves, one would have thought so. One would have thought that their common sense would have alerted them to the danger. But it is difficult to say, again I am only speculating.

Sthirananda: You have got a situation where there weren't enough real bhikkhus to go around.

S: Ah, mm, yes.

Kevala: You get the impression of a deterioration over a number of years. If it was common practice to let people in, almost anybody, the people within the Sangha, who perhaps weren't individual enough to be able to see those people, and now that they can take them on. But as the deterioration continues, they still let people in in the same way, but the people that were already in the Sangha were less and less able to actually handle them.

S: Yes.

Kevala: Again it seems that the seed of the misunderstanding or the leeway for misinterpretation started with the Buddha himself.

S: Well yes one might even say that. But one might say that even a Buddha cannot foresee all possible contingencies. One might say that, not on the mundane level. The Buddha didn't claim to be omniscient in any case. He claimed to be omniscient with regard to the path and the goal, the path presumably in principle, but not with regard to all possible conditions that might arise.

Kevala: Also I was thinking this the other day when I was reading about Homer, the person who writes the book says he didn't have much idea of 'system', and I was thinking perhaps this could be applied to the Buddha. We can look back now with quite a sophisticated idea of systems and we can actually view quite far ahead. But perhaps in those days, systematization just wasn't developed.

Sthirananda: If you started off with a natural morality you wouldn't need it. It is only deterioration, if you like, that gives birth to systems.

S: Anyway, that is the question of size or greatness. I think we had better move on to the next one.

Subhuti: Actually we have dealt with that mainly in terms of wealth and fame. It is saying that greatness itself is a cause of decline.

S: Well, no, I wouldn't say that greatness in itself is a cause of decline.

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Subhuti: Well no, "until the Order is arrived at greatness", which doesn't imply that it is the greatness that causes the cankers.

S: Not directly anyway.

Prasannasiddhi: How did the Buddha know?

S: Well this is related to the question which I mentioned earlier on as to whether the Buddha actually said this or whether it reflects a later understanding of things, so to speak, put in the Buddha's mouth. But it could have been the Buddha's own understanding because he was teaching for forty-five years and a lot could have happened. He could have seen the Sangha grow and develop. And he could even have seen the beginnings of deterioration. That is not impossible, but it is difficult to be sure about it.

When something has attained to a certain size, any sort of organization or institution, people do have a higher regard for it, don't they ? So are more likely to join it just because it is big and apparently successful. So that is a danger point. It may not even be that there is a question of support, but at least it is big and it is well known and people may feel like identifying with something powerful and successful.

S: Prestigious, yes, Security, yes.

Kevala: People just see it as a group.

S: 'If it is big it must be good'. Well this is what people feel about the Catholic Church. It is probably the main thing about the Catholic Church that still attracts people. It is so big. It is universal. It is found all over the world. And it has existed for two thousand years. It is a strongly organized, highly centralized body. It seems very strong. It seems very powerful. People want to belong to something like this, identify with something like this.

Prasannasiddhi: The interest in it is so big that they think...

S: 'all those people cannot be wrong.' This is what Martin Luther was told. I don't whether it was the Diet of Worms or some other meeting, but he was at that point asked, "Do you think that you Martin Luther, a poor monk, are right and the whole of the rest of the Church is wrong ?" But Luther had sufficient self-confidence to say in effect, "well yes, I think that is possible, that I am right, and that the whole of the Church is wrong." Which to others just

seemed impossible. It seemed as though he was a madman to say this.

Kevala: But why is it that the Buddha said that the group decision can be wrong? He said that somewhere.

S: I don't remember. Well I said it, but... (laughter)

So there is the question of sheer greatness in the sense of size exercising its own appeal and therefore perhaps attracting the wrong sort of people quite apart from the question of the prosperity of the Order.

Subhuti: So perhaps a common factor amongst all of these is that they are ways in which people are attracted to the Sangha for the wrong reason.

S: It would seem to, and therefore since the wrong people are attracted and not only attracted are allowed in, deterioration takes place.

So there is "not until the Order has arrived at greatness; not until the Order has arrived at the height of gain", well that in effect we have discussed, yes; "and at the height of fame". That is also interesting. All these things seem to hang [110] together.

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps the Buddha may have not actually, he could have just as well said, "not the height, but just at a certain level of greatness" not necessarily the height of greatness ...

S: Well in a sense there is no height, because you can always imagine the Sangha being more prosperous and having even more monasteries, and even more wealth. I think one shouldn't take that expression too literally. The idiom simply means 'at great gain'.

Alaya: Isn't there another aspect there in that early on there might be people who have been on their own striving for years and then they just need to contact the Buddha. That turns them about. Whereas later on, most people would have heard and would come at an earlier stage.

S: Well, might not even come at an earlier stage, might just come with a completely worldly motivation, just because of the size the fame the gain and so on.

Alaya: Aside from that you wouldn't get people who had been striving for years and years unknown and then just coming along and being 'turned about'.

Subhuti: More beginners.

Alaya: Yes, many more beginners. Their motives would be right as it were.

S: Well you get that in Buddhist countries today, in some cases you have had it for hundreds of years. The whole population is Buddhist. So every family wants to put their son into a monastery, it is just part of the established order of things. So if that happens well obviously the level of the Sangha generally cannot be probably very high.

So, "not until the Order has arrived at the height of gain, at the height of fame", and then "at

much learning" I think that is (Bahusattya ?) learning. So why should that be?

Subhuti: Is it that knowledge and learning are very impressive?

S: Well what I think it represents is that the spiritual community has become confused with what Coleridge calls a clerisy. The bhikkhus have become the learned class simply. You join them for the sake of an education. This certainly is the case or was the case until very recently in say Ceylon and in Burma. The monks were the learned people and so they became identified with learning, with education. So if you wanted to become a learned man, you joined the Order.

Subhuti: And therefore power.

S: Well you may or you may not have been interested in power, but if you just wanted to acquire learning, well you just became a monk, even though in a sense you weren't interested in becoming a monk. This was the position with regard to the Church, the Christian Church in the West all through the Middle Ages. If you wanted a career, and you weren't nobly born, you didn't have influential parents, you just joined the Church and just worked your way up, and became a minister or something of that sort, as well as a bishop.

Alaya: I was thinking in that context that also is the way that the Church held power, by the Church being educated.

S: Oh yes, because the Church supplied the Administrators to the kings, the assistants and the diplomats even.

Alaya; That would be the deterioration of the Sangha when it became a political power.

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S: But here in the case of the Buddhist Sangha, it wasn't quite like that, because learning, well literacy at least was widespread in Buddhist countries compared with medieval Christian countries in Europe. But certainly the Bhikkhus did tend to be the learned body, the cultured body even, rather than the spiritual body.

Subhuti: It became a profession.

S: It became a profession, yes. Either, in England at least it was either the army, or the law or the Church. If you weren't especially courageous well you couldn't go into the army, if you weren't very clever, you couldn't become a lawyer, all right then, if you were neither into the Church you went. They required neither courage nor learning.

Kevala: There was a story about a woman who brought her son to the LBC; she was sussing out the possibilities of him taking up meditation teaching as a career.

S: No. I didn't hear that story. It's not impossible.

Prasannasiddhi: All this sort of represents the fact that when it is on its way up, when something is beginning to flourish, the only people who are interested are those who are interested in the goal. Then once it has built up a certain sort of momentum to enable it to be



more effective in pursuing that goal maybe they devise specific places for study and specific things to study, and they develop a wider plan of study, actually they develop a good system of study and then other people get interested in the lesser goals...

S: Well this did happen, it seems even in Nalanda lay people were admitted at one stage and even non-Buddhists to a limited extent, which would seem to have diluted the whole thing. Originally the idea of a wide curriculum was in the case of the Mahayana if you wanted to be a Bodhisattva and help a large number of people you had to be well equipped and be able to approach and deal with all sorts of people, so you needed a very broad background, a lot of knowledge. So that was why you studied all the arts and sciences so that you could put the Bodhisattva Ideal into operation. But once there was a place where all the arts and sciences could be studied, well clearly people wanted to join who had no interest in the Bodhisattva Ideal. And the same thing happened exactly in the West. The universities, mostly, were established by the Dominicans and the Franciscans for religious purposes, but gradually they attracted people who wanted a secular education, and now as we know they are completely secularized. I mean the latest step being when women were admitted. That has happened in some Universities even in our life-time. I saw it happening in the term that I was at Yale. Well Yale wasn't established by monks, but it was established basically for religious reasons to provide ministers of the gospel for the community. Now of course it just gives a secular education and divinity is just one department amongst so many others.

Prasannasiddhi: What about in Tibet ? Did anything along these lines happen in Tibet ?

S: It would seem not. Because they certainly did have a very wide spread of studies. But at the same time their way of life was really so rigorous, and difficult that unless you were really seriously interested you just wouldn't join.

Sthirananda: It seems that in Tibet you have to some degree the preservation of a spiritual community whereas in India you have the decline of it.

S: The Tibetans on the whole, without idealizing them, they do seem to have preserved the spiritual community much better, especially [112] in its monastic form much better than probably any other part of the Buddhist world, until of course the Chinese invasion.

Sthirananda: What happened in India was that Buddhism was assimilated into the conventional culture. It didn't seem to... perhaps it had an effect at the same time, but it seemed to have...

S: Well of course in India you had Hinduism, you had Brahmanism competing all the time. In Tibet there was the Bon tradition, but then that didn't have anything like the same cultural or spiritual appeal or prestige.

Kevala: The tradition of sending the son to the monastery was quite strong in Tibet.

S: That is true; but whatever might be the reasons for sending him, once he got there, he was within a very firm or strong training context.

Kevala: And he would be sent quite young.

S: More often than not yes. Very young. In the case of ordinary monks, about seven, in the case of incarnate lamas, who had to be more carefully trained, at the age of three or four. They'd get them away from their mothers as early as that. They don't usually see their mothers after that, except maybe every two or three years. They are entirely brought up by the monks.

Prasannasiddhi: Did they establish monastic universities in Tibet?

S: Well in a sense all the larger monasteries were what we would call monastic universities, they all had their sort of complete self-contained programme of study, so that one could follow the whole course there itself. Each monastery was a whole complex of buildings not just one building or just a few, but a complex of even hundreds of different buildings within one particular area.

Prasannasiddhi: Were there women connected with the monastic universities?

S: No, they had no connection whatever. There were certain temples within the area they could visit just to worship during the daytime, but they had to be off the premises and out of the gate by sunset. And they weren't allowed elsewhere other than in the temples, as we would say.

Kevala: Are you talking about the nuns?

S: No, any woman.

Kevala: Did the nuns have a special ...?

S: Well I have spoken about nuns somewhere else. There were very few nuns in comparison to monks. Nuns from more respectable families stayed at home, they didn't join nunneries even. Usually their relations provided separate quarters for them, and they lived religious lives there, observing vows and studying. Sometimes tutors came to instruct them, that was in the more respectable families, a few would join nunneries, and others as it were from less respectable or poorer families would just become wandering nuns, beggar-like nuns, just trudging from place begging and living in that sort of way. They weren't very highly regarded. But there were very few nunneries of any size at all. Tibetan women seemed not to take to the religious life in the way that the men did. Or not to the monastic life. Though they were very pious, very devout, but not to the point of joining the nunneries in the same numbers that the men joined the monasteries. Nunneries were very small in comparison and very few.

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Prasannasiddhi: Were the monasteries established quite separately from the villages in Tibet?

S: Usually the monasteries were fairly isolated. Not always. The big ones at Lhasa were just near, within a few miles of the capital. But more often than not, if they were of any size, they were self-contained, they had their own lands, their own income.

Prasannasiddhi: Monks couldn't be tempted to join the Tibetan monasteries just because it would be a means of support?

S: Only if they were very very poor because they didn't get much in the way of support. The

only support that they got apart from a place to stay would be the tea that was provided during the community services with perhaps a little barley flour. Everything else had to be provided by the monk himself or his family.

Prasannasiddhi: Even his food?

S: Oh yes. The monastery did not supply anything beyond the basic tea and barley flour at the most.

Prasannasiddhi: This is the case for all the monks? Even up to the senior monks?

S: In the case of the Abbot, well there would be a special provision for his maintenance; or people might want to give him something extra. But for the ordinary monk, he just had to make his own way. Many monks had what we would call part-time jobs. They lived in the monastery, took part in everything, but they also had part-time jobs, some monks were tailors, and they worked as tailors, and made clothes even for the laity, made a little money, and they maintained themselves out of that in the monastery. There were monk carpenters who were working in the same way. Or for instance some monks would attach themselves to a particular teacher, if he was a little well known, he would get many presents from the lay people and he would support his own pupils out of that, that was quite common. I mean Geshe Rabten in his auto-biography, he describes this sort of system. But in Tibet it certainly wasn't as soon as you joined the monastery you were automatically provided with everything, no, it was far from being the case. That is the case in Theravada countries if you become a monk there, especially in say Thailand, you are very well looked after indeed. So that does apply to some extent there. But not in Tibet.

Prasannasiddhi: In Theravada countries, the system...

S: There it is much more the system of the lay people supporting the bhikkhus and providing the bhikkhus with everything. That system is much more strongly established there. I used to meet lots of Thai bhikkhus and I used to be surprised at the extent to which they were provided for. The lay people used to give them cameras, fountain pens, typewriters, radios, TV They were all offered, oh yes, abundantly. They would have many of these things, three or four cameras, all that sort of thing, binoculars, all provided by the lay people.

Subhuti: Piyasilo was saying that many bhikkhus were actually rich.

S: Yes, that is true. From Dana. So again that seems to be, observing the letter perhaps, though I'm even doubtful about that, but certainly not observing the spirit. That wasn't the case in Tibet.

Prasannasiddhi: That wouldn't have anything to do with perhaps the fact that the laity were wealthier in the Theravadin countries so therefore had more to give away?

[114]

S: It may have been something to do with the fact that Ceylon, Burma, Thailand where the Theravada was and is very strong, are prosperous countries in the sense that the land is fertile, it is easy to live. They are sub-tropical countries, you don't require much in the way of shelter. So there is a lot of what one might call simple luxury. Tibet is completely different. It is very

hard to make a living there. So the Tibetans generally, whether lay people or monks, were accustomed to a much harder kind of life.

Kevala: That must have changed quite a bit since the Tibetans came to India. The lay people probably support the monks much more now.

S: Well, yes and no, because a lot of the monks who came to India are no longer living as monks. They have sort of given up.

Alaya: I thought quite a lot of the monasteries in Tibet owned land which they then leased out. They got a lot of their revenue from that.

S: Well that is true. Even so, if you have got at least thousands of monks, they will need a lot of support in most cases they just get their basic ration of tea, which of course was butter tea, which is quite nourishing and a bit of barley flour, and of course their lodging.

So I think the chances of joining, a Tibetan, joining a monastery for an easy life were much less than in the case of the Theravada countries. Anyway the principle involved is pretty obvious. But then there is another condition, due to which cankers may arise. "At long standing, when the Order arrives at long standing". That is to say, it has got the prestige of an established body. One wonders whether the Buddha could have said this. Whether he could have referred to the Order as being of long standing. Though one could say that he just understood that this might happen or could happen in the future.

Subhuti: You could even say the same with the FWBO, that because it has been going for a certain amount of time it has more weight.

S: Well one can understand people having more confidence in something which has continued for a long time.

Subhuti: It is not a flash in the pan.

S: No, no. Well Christmas Humphreys always beats this particular drum, that the Buddhist Society has been going for so many years. Yes. It is the oldest this that and the other.

Kevala: When we were discussing "height of fame" we were saying that people were attracted for negative reasons towards established groups. Now we are saying that there is also a positive attraction in established groups.

S: Well, on the group level, because if you want to join something, if you want to give yourself to something, well you would like to be sure that you are giving yourself to something that is going to last. Suppose I say, "I want to give my life to such and such group" well you want to be sure that it is going to last your lifetime. So if it is already lasted sever human lifetimes, well the chances are that it is going to continue. But this again is just on the group level as it were. The fact that a body continues is no guarantee of its spiritual quality at all, otherwise the Catholic Church would stand no doubt pretty high on the list. Of course Buddhism even higher. The Vedic tradition even higher. But the basic principle seems to be here that the Order as a sort of social group attains a certain sort of prestige and standing which starts attracting people who are just interested in that prestige and standing and are not

attracted for spiritual reasons. And then the Order becomes overburdened [115] with such people and not for one reason or another kept out and the Order therefore deteriorates.

Subhuti: Like a well-established club.

Kevala: So we are not saying that this establishment in the sense of strength is a bad thing. We are just saying that that does attract people for the wrong reasons sometimes.

S: Yes. It is certainly not a bad thing that the spiritual community should be of long standing, but if people are attracted merely by the fact that what appears to them as a group is of long standing and are therefore impressed by that for purely sort of group reasons, well then that is really not a sufficient reason for them joining that spiritual community. And if they do, if they somehow manage to get in, technically, then that will contribute to the deterioration of that community. It will be diluted.

Alaya: It is like thinking someone is wise because they have white hair, when they might just be old.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: So really the whole solution to this is care with admitting people to the Order.

S: Yes that seems to be the key really.

Subhuti: In the Canon when people ask to be ordained, are they ever refused ... ?

S: I think a refusal in a Buddhist country would be almost unheard of, which is really quite strange. I think in most Buddhist countries there are certain monasteries, because monasteries and chapters tend to get identified, which do develop a reputation for strictness, and sometimes are esteemed on that account. This certainly happens with some of the Zen monasteries. But usually if someone wants to become a monk, well he will find some monastery or some chapter to take him. It would be very, very unusual if he couldn't find admittance anywhere. I think it would be unheard of. It could be that a particular monastery wouldn't accept him, but I think it would be unheard of that no monastery would accept him. Unless of course he had already been found wanting and turned out of several monasteries already, that would be different. Otherwise anyone who presents himself would be accepted usually.

Subhuti: What about at the time of the Buddha? Do we have instances...

S: I don't remember any instance of anyone being refused.

Subhuti: There was Sona, wasn't there, who wanted to go forth, and the Buddha told him to wait.

S: I don't remember that incident. But even that was only waiting.

Kevala: The thing is that the Buddha obviously felt that he could handle anyone.

S: Well, he could even handle someone like Angulimala. But it does seem that one has to be careful that there isn't too great an imbalance between the more experienced and the less experienced, so that it becomes impossible for the experienced to give the requisite attention to the inexperienced. Anyway, that appears reasonably clear (Pause)

Prasannasiddhi: Would it be the case that some form of centralization is one of the factors that one could incorporate to prevent [116] this from arising?

S: It might well help, but it wouldn't guarantee, because centralization would involve say, someone like the Buddha at the centre of things, but supposing those who were responsible for electing him made a mistake. You see what I mean ?

Prasannasiddhi: Well perhaps have a central body rather than a central person.

Subhuti: Even that could be..

Prasannasiddhi: Well in that case it would be either all or none, because the central body, either the whole lot would go ... but if it is not centralized well then one or two groups would go, and the rest of the Sangha would be OK, but you could see it begin to...

S: In retrospect it would seem that probably one of the factors leading to the deterioration of the Sangha in Asoka's time was excessive decentralization.

Sthirananda: Could it also be said that what contributed as well, was the amount of wealth available, like the patronage given seems to have been quite ...

S: Excessive. Sometimes the lay people themselves, well one sees this even today, were not very wise in the kind of support that they gave and sometimes monks should have refused the sort of support that lay people wanted to give.

Sthirananda: There is quite a contrast between the Buddhists in Asoka's time and Tibet which was very austere in comparison. But its sheer austerity seems to have contributed to the survival of it's substance in a way, the Dharma, whereas the wealth put into the Sangha seems to have in some respects contributed towards its decline.  
People become complacent with wealth.

S: Well I think it is not only a question of wealth, but the use to which the wealth is put. In the case of the Theravada much of the wealth tends to go in the form of offerings and gifts to the individual monk. But supposing the wealth is lavished on images and statues and works of art to decorate the monastery and which don't belong to anybody, that would seem to be rather different because you are not likely to be tempted to join the monastery just because you live in a beautifully decorated, or have the use of a beautifully decorated shrine, when you don't really have much in the way of personal possessions.

Prasannasiddhi: You could perhaps say that one of the mistakes of the Theravada countries is that somehow the society's got a bit out of gear in that more people are earning money, and they are earning more than in actual fact they need.

S: Also there is the whole question of merit, of making merit. And the monks being the field

for merit, that is to say, you may not want to make much of a spiritual effort yourself, but you want to go to heaven. One of the things you can do to make sure you get to heaven is to give dana to the monks. So you don't consider whether the dana you're giving is wisely given or whether the monks need those things, you just want to give a lot so that you earn merit, so that you get to heaven. So there is that sort of distortion or exaggeration about the teaching about merit.

Subhuti: The question of centralization, we could explore that a bit more. In a sense it is not so much centralization that is required [117] but in terms of your three types of people you must have sufficient of something like type three in proportion to type two.

S: Yes, a proper ratio must be observed.

Subhuti: So if there is a centralization it must preserve that.

S: Principle. There must be some means whether by centralization or not of preserving that general principle, yes.

Alaya: The centre stage is held by the type three. The decisions.

Subhuti: There is an attempt at that by making the ten year rule, but that is not really sufficient.

S: No. There is some reference to this the... there is a footnote here, which maybe we ought to look at. "six: rattannuta." that is to say of long standing. "Here as in the other cases, the reference is to the members of the Order rather than to the Order as a whole." Though I think that distinction is a bit meaningless. "So here the meaning is "when those who have gone forth for a long time know how many nights it is since they first went forth". The commentary refers to Upasena Vangantaputta's offence in ordaining his pupil when he himself was only of one year's standing. He had seen monks being ordained when they were of less than ten years standing. So, "one of less than ten years standing should not be ordained" and "one should not be ordained by an ignorant, inexperienced monk... I allow monks to be ordained by an experienced, capable monk if they are of ten years' standing or more than ten years' standing."

Subhuti: They have got to be experienced and capable; and of ten years' standing. It is not that they can automatically if they are of ten years' standing.

S: No, though that is the modern understanding. Well actually to give them their due, it does happen in Theravada countries that monks who are of long standing, who have been monks twenty, thirty years, but who know that they are just not up to it and are generally known to be, they just refrain from taking any pupils. But on the other hand you could have a monk who is just very learned and very well known and competent and he assumes he is capable; or others even assume he is capable of ordaining people and having pupils. And he does so.

Prasannasiddhi: It could be that in a particular area no one is sort of ... a generation produces no one who can come up to the mark. And in a particular area, so that means in that whole area, the whole thing has degenerated.

Kevala: What is a good ratio? One to one?

S: Well, I think it is probably not quantifiable. I think to make quite sure, it should be ten to one in favour of the experienced. To make quite sure, yes. (laughter) If it was one to ten, I think that would be a very, very shaky situation. Even one to two would be not easy I think under some ... well it would depend on so many other factors. The strength of the tradition, the question of public opinion, sometimes public opinion is very relevant. Because for instance if it is known that pupils of a certain monk are misbehaving, well, the public may intervene, and scold those pupils. That could be a very helpful factor. If public opinion in that sense didn't exist well it would be more difficult.

Alaya: On a ratio basis, the larger the Order gets then the more young inexperienced Order Members you will have.

[118]

S: It is not a question of the absolute number. Not necessarily. It depends what one means by more.

Alaya: Say it grows in a certain ratio, then it will always...

S: If your rate of growth is exponential and if the rate of progress of individuals does not keep up with that, you are bound to have a top-heavy or rather under-heavy Order I suppose the mathematics of it could be worked out.

Prasannasiddhi: It might also depend on, another factor would be where your monks are established, whether they have a monastery or whatever [end of side of tape ... next side] . in the midst of a city, or whether they live in the country where they are going to be less affected by...

S: Well, this just relates to the whole question of how quickly they progress. The more quickly you progress, the higher the level reached by a greater number of people and the more new inexperienced people you can take in. Anyway, perhaps we should pass on now, so that we can complete this. There is one sort of section left. There is a parable - "The parable of the Thoroughbred Colt"... Would someone like to read the whole parable, and then we can discuss its significance.

"You were few at the time when I, Bhaddali, taught you the disquisition on Dhamma - the Parable of the Thoroughbred Colt. Do you, Bhaddali, remember?"

"No, reverend sir "

"To what cause do you attribute this, Bhaddali?"

"It is that I, reverend sir, for a long time was not one who carried out in full the training under the Teacher's instruction."

"This was not the only cause or reason, Bhaddali. For a long time, Bhaddali, I have known your mind with my (and I knew): While Dhamma is being taught by me this foolish man does not listen to Dhamma with ready ear, applying himself, paying attention, concentrating with all his mind. However, I, Bhaddali, will teach you the disquisition on Dhamma - the Parable of the Thoroughbred Colt. Listen to it, attend carefully, and I will speak "

"Yes, reverend sir." the venerable Bhaddali answered the Lord in assent. The Lord spoke thus: "Bhaddali, as a skilled horse-trainer, having received a beautiful thoroughbred, first of all makes it get used to the training in respect of wearing the bit: while it is getting used to the training in respect of wearing the bit, whatever the contortions, capers, struggles while it is



getting used to a training it was not used to before, yet because of the continual training, the gradual training it is brought to perfection in that respect. When, Bhaddali, the beautiful thoroughbred is perfected in that respect by the continual training, the gradual training, the horse-trainer makes it get used to a further training in respect of wearing the harness... because of the gradual training it is brought to perfection in that respect. When, Bhaddali, the beautiful thoroughbred is perfected in that respect by the continual training, the gradual training, the horse-trainer makes it get used to a [119] further training in respect of going straight on, in respect of (running in) a circle, in respect of its hoofs, in respect of galloping, of neighing, of the "royal trick", the "royal acrobatic feat", in respect of matchless speed, of matchless swiftness, of matchless manners. While it is getting used to the training in matchless speed, matchless swiftness, matchless manners, whatever the contortions, capers, struggles while it is getting used to a training it was not used to before, yet because of the continual training, the gradual training; it is brought to perfection in each respect. When, Bhaddali, the beautiful thoroughbred, when endowed with these ten qualities becomes worthy of a king, a royal treasure, and it is reckoned as an attribute of royalty. Even, so, Bhaddali, if a monk is endowed with ten qualities, he is worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, to be saluted with joined palms, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world. With what ten? Herein, Bhaddali, a monk is endowed with an adept's right view, he is endowed with an adept's right thought, he is endowed with an adept's right speech, he is endowed with an adept's right action, he is endowed with an adept's right mode of livelihood, he is endowed with an adept's right endeavour, he is endowed with an adept's right mindfulness, he is endowed with an adept's right concentration, he is endowed with an adept's right knowledge, he is endowed with an adept's right freedom. Bhaddali, if a monk is endowed with these ten qualities, he is worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, to be saluted with joined palms, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world."

Thus spoke the Lord. Delighted, the venerable Bhaddali rejoiced in what the Lord had said"

S: So what is the connection of this parable of the Colt with what has gone before?

Subhuti: It is the process of training.

S: It is the process of training. Also it suggests the training is quite specific, consisting of quite definite things as in the case of... well the spiritual training is in the same way that the thoroughbred colt is. Also it suggests that Bhaddali himself originally was sort of subject to contortion, capers and struggles.

So training presupposes a trainer. The Buddha speaks of a skilled horse-trainer, having received a beautiful thoroughbred. So this suggests if the inexperienced in the Order are not to outnumber the experienced, it presupposes that the experienced will be as it were skilled horse-trainers, that they will be able to bring about some change in the inexperienced. If that isn't so they shouldn't take them on.

Kevala: It suggests that they should have been a horse themselves at some point, they have gone through those struggles themselves, they know what those struggles are.

S: Well not necessarily, because they might have been very highly gifted, as some of the Buddha's disciples were, didn't go through any struggles apparently, as far as we know like Sariputra and Moggallana. As soon as they heard the teaching they recognized the [120] truth

of it and realized it and acted upon it. But at the same time Sariputra was well known for his skill in teaching.

So what it suggests is that if the Sangha is not to deteriorate, first of all there must be discrimination in admitting new members, and then there must be proper provision for training them afterwards. Of course the ultimate safeguard of the Order was its capacity to expel people. That was an absolute last resort. And short of that of course there was what was called the Brahmadaṇḍa, the extreme penalty, where the offending monk was sent to Coventry. No one would speak to him, no one would have anything to do with him, which was quite extreme. This appears not to have been incorporated into the Vinaya, but is mentioned towards the end of the Mahāparinibbāna sūta. The offending monk was sent to Coventry, no one would speak to him or have anything to do with him. Brahmadaṇḍa, which means extreme penalty, literally big stick.

Again of course the attitude of the public is to some extent relevant, even of the Government, even of the law. For instance there was a well known case many years ago in Korea about which I wrote something. Korea had a monastic Sangha. During the Japanese occupation, under Japanese influence some of the monks married. So after the Japanese were driven out, there was a situation remaining of some monks in the monastery being married and others not. The unmarried monks, the celibate monks, then claimed of course that the married monks were in contravention of the Vinaya and should just leave the monastery. And of course then the married monks, if you can use that term, sort of appealed to the authorities about it, saying that "they had the right to stay there". So there was a big disturbance in this connection. And clearly the attitude of the authorities would be, the secular authorities, would be decisive. Because if they ruled that the married monks had the right to continue to live there, well the unmarried ones would only have the option of leaving themselves and setting themselves up independently elsewhere with all the difficulties that would involve. So usually in Buddhist countries the government has underwritten the Vinaya. So that for instance if the Sangha expelled a monk, then the law would enforce that. Of course that doesn't preclude the possibility of a monk being wrongfully expelled in some extreme cases. He might be the only one in step so to speak. But there is no particular type of organization or particular rules even can help, but the decisive factor can only be the actual sense of responsibility of the individuals involved

Alaya: How could a monk be expelled? You mean just be expelled from the monastery? He couldn't be expelled, he could be disrobed.

S: Yes, and disrobed. In most Buddhist countries, there are those sort of arrangements. So if he refuses to disrobe, his robes can be forcibly taken off him by the police. This is the case in Thailand.

Kevala: (Unclear)

S: No, he can be arrested. If, in Thailand, a monk behaves improperly in public, he can be arrested by the police and escorted back to his monastery where he is dealt with by the abbot. And, if disrobed, the police if necessary; make sure that he does actually take off the robes. This system can be abused. There can be too close a connection between the Sangha and the secular establishment. I know a monk who was forcibly disrobed simply because he read Marxist literature, which is not an offence under the Vinaya at all. But he was forcibly

disrobed because the Government didn't like [121] monks taking an interest in, that is the Fascist militarist Government didn't like monks even looking at Marxist literature. He only looked at it for philosophical reasons, he wanted to know what dialectical materialism was all about, and whether it had any bearing on Buddhism, or what particular micchaditthi it corresponded to, but the mere fact that he had Marxist literature in his room was enough. So that was a complete abuse of that particular custom.

Alaya: In our Order we haven't the machinery for dis-kesa-ing someone because it hasn't yet arisen.

S: Well what usually happens is that people as it were expel themselves by non-attendance and non-participation, they still have their kesa in their drawer, but that doesn't really mean very much. Technically they may still be members of the order, if you can be technically a member of the Order.

Alaya: But it hasn't arisen yet that there has been some strong wilful person who has caused a lot of havoc. We...

S: No, we tend not to have strong wilful people, whether positive or negative.

Kevala: Do you happen to know in the case of that monk, whether Marxist literature was banned generally in the country?

S: I don't think it was officially banned. But they just didn't like monks particularly... the Sangha was supposed to be part of the bulwark against communism. So he was actually imprisoned for some years. But eventually when the Government changed, or rather when the Prime Minister was changed he was released and sort of reinstated. He was a very well known scholarly monk. I met him in Calcutta. Not at all a militant monk or anything, but just a quiet scholarly monk, who was rather interested, heard all about Communism and Marxism, what was it all about, so he just got hold of some literature and started reading it, nothing more than that, but he was arrested, forcibly disrobed and imprisoned. He wasn't brought to trial, because you know they didn't have that sort of Government.

Prasannasiddhi: So the Government had knowledge of the affairs of the Sangha.

S: Well in Thailand it is still the case that the Sangha is controlled by the Education Department. There is a Sangha Act.

Alaya: In Thailand the Sangha seems to have become a refuge for scandalous politicians who if they don't become a monk...

S: Yes, if they are out of power, or in any sort of danger they become monks until the coast is clear, then they emerge and go back into politics.

Alaya: A refuge for bandits.

S: Not quite that, though that was the case in Burma. At one time in Burma there were many ex-bandits in the Sangha, just lying low for a while.

: I was thinking of this prime minister of Thailand recently, who had caused quite a lot of students to be murdered, he [122] was not a very good chap, and then he became a bhikkhu and therefore avoided being brought to trial by the people.

: Bhikkhus can't be brought to trial. Is that what you're saying?

: Yes

S: Oh no, a bhikkhu can be brought to trial.

: Well he avoided it (unclear).

S: Yes, well you know, I'd have to read the sort of official (unclear) to be able to say anything. I don't think that, well, put it this way, even if you're innocent you can be punished in Thailand, as that monk was (unclear) as bhikkhus if you were guilty, if you were really guilty, and they wanted to punish you, they'd punish you, whatever you did, whether you were in or out of the Order.

But joining the Order in Thailand certainly for discredited politicians helps to sort of surround them with some purely fictitious air of respectability, even if not of sanctity. It is a gesture calculated to appeal to the pious masses and therefore to enhance your sort of sagging prestige. It is rather for instance as though if Mr Heath at one stage of his career had withdrawn into a Carthusian monastery to emerge when after Mrs Thatcher had fallen sort of thing to take over again. Oo Nu when he was out of power became a monk for a while.

Anyway, any further point, because time is up? The Buddha's suggestion seems to be that Bhaddali is now being trained like the thoroughbred colt and the Buddha is sort of taking him in hand, and that is what he needs, being put through his paces. And maybe right at the beginning in laying down that sikkhapadam, the eating at one session, well it was all part of the general training, which Bhaddali was resisting.

Kovida: But presumably you are not suggesting that this was done specifically for Bhaddali?

S: No, the Buddha laid it down for the Order as a whole. I mean perhaps someone like the Buddha could as it were train a whole herd of horses all at once. Anyway, perhaps we should leave it there.

One could always just take up the parable by itself for more intensive study in a study group. There are similar parables in several other places. I think this particular comparison is quite a standard one. Because there is this epithet of the Buddha "Purisadama sarati", the charioteer of men to be tamed.

Subhuti: (Unclear) [talks about once it's perfected in each respect the horse-trainer provides it further with a gloss and shine].

S: Which is not explained by the commentary, which suggests that there has got to be a touch of beauty as well.

Subhuti: Also interestingly, it is the Eightfold Path plus two.

S: Yes, the adept by the way is the asekha, the one who has nothing further to learn, the Arhant. So the sammamasadhi ... because here [123] clearly it is the transcendental Eightfold Path plus sammajhana, knowledge is Jnana, and vimutti, sammavimutti. I don't know whether the ten qualities of the adept correspond with the ten of the horse or vice versa. It's difficult to say.

Subhuti: It's quite a common list, isn't it? That list of ten?

S: It's not very common I would say, no.

Prasannasiddhi: There is also this emphasis on gradual training.

S: Yes, well this is an emphasis throughout the Pali Canon.

Prasannasiddhi: Also the way that the Buddha, it is almost like he is training him in respect of one thing after the other, how to do one thing and then how to do the next, and so on. It's not a general hotchpotch.

S: There were in ancient Indian literature manuals of horse-training and elephant training and so on. Ashvasastra, and Patthisastra. The ancient Indians were well versed in these things, and we have manuals of this sort still surviving in Sanskrit literature. I think especially with regard to elephants, as far as I remember horses too.

OK then we'll leave it there.

END OF SEMINAR

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira December 1998