

## 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*

**Seminar held at Vinehall - April 1981**  
**The Dhammapada Chapters 14 and 20**

Present: Johnny Baker, Brian Duff, Mark Bowden, Bob Jones, Cieron Saunders, Mike Scherke, Murray Wright, Pete Shann, Andy Friends, Clive Pomfret.

S: In the course of these nine days we're going to do nine chapters from the Dhammapada, the three miscellaneous chapters, chapters which I so far haven't translated. We're going to use Buddhadatta's translation, but perhaps in the course of the nine days the rudiments of a translation will emerge to be added to those chapters I've already done. The three chapters have been deliberately chosen or purposefully chosen. We're going to do the Buddhavagga, the Maggavagga and the Sukhavagga, that is to say the chapter on the Buddha, the chapter on the Path and the chapter on Happiness and these will be dealing roughly and approximately with the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Because the Buddha is clearly the Buddha, though there is other material in that chapter as we will discover. The Dharma is of course a path and if we're not happy we can hardly be said to live in the Sangha at all. Sukhavagga meaning the of Happiness or Chapter of Happiness. So these three chapters we can take as concerning the Buddha, the Path and Happiness. We're really concerned with the Buddha the Dharma and Sangha, so we'll be looking at them in that sort of light. We'll go through them verse by verse, trying to understand each verse in turn, quite thoroughly and considering any incidental or associated or even loosely connected questions that arise from time to time.

14 Buddhavagga. The enlightened One. v 179

"Whose conquest is not to be undone, whom not even a bit of those conquered passions follow, that Awakened One whose sphere is endless, by what path will you trace him, that Pathless one?"

S: So we're concerned in this chapter with the Buddha and this particular verse makes various statements about the Buddha. It says for instance, that "this conquest is not to be undone", it says that "not even a bit of the conquered passion follows Him", it says that "his sphere is endless" that "his path cannot be traced", that he is "A pathless one". so these various statements made about the Buddha... so let's take them one by one in the order in which they are made. "Whose conquest is not to be undone" Conquest of what? The verse itself tells you in the next line, yes the translation says "passions". The word is assa. I looked it up in the dictionary but unfortunately for some reason or other, the dictionary doesn't contain the word, maybe because it is a very common word. But assa is the same as the Sanskrit asa, which means hope, expectations and therefore desire. So it is not quite desire in the straightforward sense, it is a sort of looking forward to the next [2] thing because you're not satisfied with the thing that you've actually got it is something more like that. Although assa is usually translated as Hope it is much more like yearning and therefore in a sense craving. It comes very close to tanha or trsna, thirst or craving. So the first line speaks of the Buddha as having conquered yearning and therefore in a sense craving, thirst hope desire that is to say neurotic desire and it makes the further statement that His conquest or that conquest is not to be undone that is to say it is not to be reversed. So what does that tell you about the Buddha more specifically? What does it tell you about the conquest of these hopes, these expectations these cravings?

Mark: It's compete and utter.

S: It is complete and utter, but what is people's view and experience with regard to these states?

Mark: they recur.

S: they recur, for instance in connection with meditation, what do you usually find? You find that-if the mind is disturbed by .a definite craving it is quite impossible for you to meditate.. but in the course of the meditation, in the course of the jhana experience, what do you find? with regard to craving?

Murray: It is temporarily suspended.

S: It is temporarily-suspended. so you can have a quite blissful, quite ecstatic, quite concentrated, quite calm experience of the dhyanas, but after the immersion in the jhana state what usually happens?

v: Those states recur

S: Those cravings recur. So can you say that they've been really conquered? You can't for to conquer them means that they've been destroyed at root. So the question arises, well several questions arise.. one is how do you in fact destroy the cravings at the root so that they don't recur, so that they don't re-emerge? and if they do re-emerge or recur after even the experience of the dhyana states what is the purpose, what is the function of these dhyana states? could one not even dispense with them? So first of all with regards to cutting at the root of these cravings... what is it that cuts at the root and that conquers them finally?

v: When you see through them, see that they don't really conduce to happiness.

S: When you really see through them, not in any intellectual not in a theoretical way, well what is the term?

v: Wisdom, Vipassana

[3]

S: Vipassana. So therefore the dhyana experience, the samatha experience is not enough. There the cravings or the negative emotions of any kind are simply suspended, you're free from them for the time being. But it's only by virtue of some genuine insight into the nature of these states in themselves, of your own mind of yourself or can say of Reality that they are finally and permanently transcended. But what then is the function of the dhyanas?

Murray: That is your mental state in the sense of the Hindrances.

S: Yes... but what's the function or purpose of the dhyana in relation to the insight experience? why not just develop insight? I mean some people even say this they maintain that there is no need to experience the dhyanas

v: Does it provide you with an incentive to develop that insight?

Brian: Is it not more that it actually integrates you makes you strong enough to contain the

experience?

S: Ah yes! Because there's a very great deal of difference between insight and ordinary theoretical understanding. I mean people's ordinary theoretical understanding is very weak, it's usually very weak because they are not able to concentrate, there's no energy behind it. So in order really to be able to concentrate, really to be able to see the truth of things you need all your energies together, you need all your energies behind that, effort behind that thrust as it were. And meditation you can say from one point of view at least, dhyana experience from one point of view at least is just the bringing together of all those energies into a concentrated focus of attention, so that you can then really see. That to think about things in a scattered sort of way, as we usually do, that isn't enough. So it's through the dhyana experience that the mind is made sufficiently concentrated, sufficiently one-pointed to be able to penetrate through into the truth of insight. So therefore, even though it's only by means of insight that you achieve the final conquest of the cravings, the dhyana experience mobilizes your energies for that particular purpose. So you can see from this that the dhyanas are necessary and as important as insight itself in the long run. Some schools do speak of a "dry" insight, that is to say insight which is not, so to speak, moistened by the experience of the dhyanas, but this seems to be a purely theoretical possibility, not an actual possibility at all.

Murray: Do you know what happens to these people who go on to these Vipassana courses? I met one or two at the LBC who claimed in all seeming honesty that they had had powerful experiences of one sort or another during this Vipassana,...no sort of dhyana-based meditation at all.

[4]

S: Yes ... well there are different methods of so-called vipassana meditation (karamargis?)... this particular tradition has become popular over the last 30/40 years, especially the last 20 years and there are quite a number of different teachers and it is taught in a number of different ways. Some more rigorous and other less rigorous. But broadly speaking what seems to have happened is that most of these teachers or some of these teachers still place great emphasis on isolation. You don't meditate with other people in a group, you meditate in your own room or in your own cell. You observe silence and they cut down on sleep, they systematically and deliberately reduce sleep and you have long hours of meditation that is to say the vipassana practises and you don't usually see anybody except the instructor. A prominent feature of quite a lot of the Vipassana techniques is paying attention to your movements, which is of course Buddhist practice, being aware of one's bodily movements, feelings... But they seem to do it in rather a peculiar way. Instead of remaining continuously aware of the whole flow of movement, they break the movement up into discrete bits, into a series of jerks almost. And this breaks up the flow of attention also.. And this seems to have a sort of breaking-down effect on the whole personality. Do you see the sort of thing I mean? For instance, you can sort of move your hand and you're quite aware, you're quite mindful that you are moving your hand, so there is the natural spontaneous movement - of moving your hand plus awareness. But they don't do it like that. They for instance will do it like this "I am about to move my hand. I have moved my hand. I am now going to move my hand or foot as the case may be again. I have moved it now." So that they do the walking and mindfulness practice in that sort of way. They sometimes relate it to the Abhidhamma philosophy, for instance that the fire element is now active, etc., etc. Well the result is that it's a sort of stop/go ... stop/go and this has quite, well quite unpleasant and I would say quite undesirable effects on the person concerned and that together with deprivation of sleep in some cases produces a

sort of breakdown and you have certain odd experiences and sometimes or very often quite painful experiences and some at least of these Vipassana teachers, they interpret these painful experiences as insight into Dukkha. You see what I mean? Insight into the Truth of Dukkha, which again is a separate misunderstanding because you don't necessarily have insight into the truth of Dukkha because you experience the fact of Dukkha. This is a quite different thing. So broadly speaking their technique is to sort of break you down a bit. Some people are strong enough to stand up to this and come through it and some... in a few cases it can have even a positive effect. But I have seen cases in my early days in London of people practising this so-called Vipassana, I say so-called because Vipassana practice is an essential part of all Buddhist meditation, practising specific vipassana techniques and just having [5] nervous breakdowns and going into mental hospitals. There were quite a lot of these people around in the middle and late sixties who were taught by well ... some Thais some by people who had been to Burma and Thailand from this country. So this is the so-called "dry" insight and some of these people in those days - but again there was a difference of emphasis amongst different teachers, some of the people, some of the teachers derided the experience of the dhyanas. They said it was totally unnecessary and a waste of time. They were especially scornful of the metta bhavana, this they had no time for at all... whereas I believe now there are some Vipassana teachers who do permit, if that is the right word, or tolerate, the practice of metta bhavana and who are not so hard and rigorous, who teach the technique in a milder, gentler sort of way, which is perhaps a bit more acceptable. I think the whole system has been toned down quite a bit in the last ten or fifteen years. though there are still some teachers who are teaching in this rigorous manner... the results of which are usually quite undesirable. I also noticed that these people tended to regard meditation - Vipassana - as being just a technique. They were generally people of scientific background and sympathies and the meditation teachers were very often people who had just learned the technique and were operating it were passing it on and in at least one case I say that a meditation teacher was operating the technique quite clearly as a means of satisfying his own need to control other people and to be able to affect other people and see other people sort of all breaking down as a result of the influence he had over them. And this seemed very undesirable indeed.

So the traditional classical Buddhist position is that there is no real insight without the experience of the dhyanas. The experience of the dhyanas provides the concentrated energy, the positive emotional base and also enables you as it were to receive the impact of the vipassana experience. So this is a quite important point. It is quite important to understand the distinction between Samatha or calm on the one hand and Vipassana or insight on the other and why they are both in fact necessary and Vipassana without dhyana experience is only a so-called vipassana. It is just a theoretical understanding.

Very often you find that in the case of people who are involved with this so-called vipassana tradition, they memorize the categories of the Abhidhamma and sort of recall them under the conditions I mentioned and imagining that they are in fact developing insight. But that is not the case at all. So the classical Buddhist tradition is insight on the basis of the dhyanas and one would find in one's own experience that this is what happens. You as it were immerse yourself in a more concentrated state, the Dhyana state, mental activity is suspended and then you gradually [6] emerge from that, you start up mental activity with that concentrated energy in that phase of a poised and peaceful condition and you develop insight. You understand things better and better more and more clearly.

Murray: In the sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng's discourse where he says samadhi and

prajna are inseparable, one automatically gives rise to the other. An experience of samadhi is an experience of prajna and vice versa. The samadhi he talking about there, - is that dhyana or would that be more equivalent to compassion?

S: It would seem not. It would seem that the subject, also terminology here, I have suggested somewhere, that the samadhi of which he speaks is akin to the cetovimutti or emancipation of mind of the Pali texts and the prajna to the prajna-vimutti or emancipation of wisdom. Because it is as though, when you are in the more rarefied dhyana state, in a higher dhyana state and when the negative emotions have subsided and you're very concentrated, it is as though your sort of mundane consciousness is in a very rarefied state, or becomes as it were transparent, so that there are really no hindrances present. you're not enlightened, but there are no hindrances present. So it is very difficult, say, to distinguish that state in which there are no hindrances or at least no hindrances active though the seed of them is lurking from the actual state of wisdom. So at that point the mind, the mundane mind becomes so transparent that even without actively developing vipassana there is a sort of reflection of something beyond. Do you see what I mean? And this is that sort of state of cetovimutti.. the negative emotions are suspended to such an extent that insight almost dawns naturally but not quite. Do you see what I mean?

Murray: You've got a vision of a vision

S: It's as though you could say that insight is not having any-glass in the window, there's just an open space and you can look straight out. The usual mental state is like the window when its very very dirty so you cannot see out at all. But the mind in a very purified state when the passions are suspended and completely suspended are like the glass which is there, but it's so clean you're not really sure whether the window is open or not. Whereas if you were to try to put your fist through, it goes through, so then you soon find out! So, if you try to act upon this superior samadhi state you soon find out you weren't, in fact, enlightened. But its not easy to distinguish between the two. So I think this is why the Pali scriptures, the Buddha often uses these expressions Ceto-vimutti, prajna-vimutti, together, as though the two things are put together and why perhaps, Hui Neng speaks in terms of samadhi and prajna as being inseparable. If you look at his statement in strictly doctrinal (terms, you see that) [7] that he is using samadhi in the sense of Enlightenment even and prajna in the sense of the activity of that Enlightened state. But that is to drop, as it were, the original meaning of those terms and to take up a very different Mahayana usage. Or one might even say that Hui Neng's own usage is not really even very standard Mahayana usage, but clearly he is trying to communicate something, he is trying to communicate the fact that the inner experience, maybe of enlightenment is sort of dynamic, it manifests, it operates in the world. He is trying to guard against the danger of what in the West is called quietism.

Anyway that's all come out of the first line. So "whose conquest is not to be undone" . The Buddha has conquered the passions once and for all because of his fully developed insight, His enlightenment. So his conquest is "not to be undone" and he is one whom "not even a bit of those conquered passions follows" He is no longer under their influence q P to the slightest extent. So, that awakened one, that Buddha, that enlightened one "whose sphere is endless. The word here is anantagocaran. gocaran, literally means pasture or field. Go is cow, caran is to go so it is where the cow goes, in other words the pasture, the field. So the meaning is extended to mean a whole sphere of operations, so that is why its translated here as "sphere". So "that Awakened one whose sphere" whose field, whose field of operations "is endless;

Ananta, So why is this. Why is the Buddha's sphere of operations said to be endless? In what sense is it endless?

Johnny: Because he is acting skilfully all the time. He won't come up against any obstructions caused by unskilful action.

S: mm.. He won't come up against any obstructions caused by any subjective factors.. But does that really exhaust the meaning of "endless"?

v: It sort of implies a transcendent quality that just goes beyond anything that could [2 words unclear]

S: His method of operating one can say is unconditioned, it is not dependant on any conditions. I mean conditions would be a limiting factor.

Murray: Could his subjective experience be like, quite literally endless that he experiences himself as being quite infinite say in relation to say us or himself . My main sense is one of limitations, generally.

S: Well in as much as the Buddha is the Buddha in as much as he has realized this state of enlightenment, in as much as he is, as it were, one with the unconditioned and he is unconditioned and his whole method of operation is unconditioned, not limited. And therefore endless without any limiting value. In other words it is not possible fully to understand the Way in which he operates because one understands with concepts with categories [8] and these provide the limitations. You could say it is a bit like trying to understand poetry, trying to understand the greatest poetry especially. You can't do. You've got to tune into it and you cannot give a sort of critical exposition that really communicates the essence of the poetry itself. To experience that, you've got to go to the poetry itself. It's not explicable in any terms other than it's own.

So : "by what path will you trace him, that Pathless one". Apadan. The Buddha's called apadan, pathless, the pathless one and this obviously connected with his being enlightened and therefore as it were one with the Unconditioned and infinite sphere or scope of operations. He's pathless you cannot trace him. You cannot track him.

v: he's creative

S: Yes, He's creative. I mean somewhere else in the Dhammapada it is said that the Buddhas, the awakened ones, the enlightened ones are like... they pass through the world, so to speak just as birds pass through the sky. The birds in passing through the sky don't leave any track or mark. It's the same with the Buddha. So people leave behind a sort of track. And what is the track?

v: Karma

S: it's karma. So the Buddha by virtue of the fact that he is the Buddha, by virtue of the fact that he has conquered all the passions leaves behind no track, leaves behind no karma. He cannot be traced. There is nothing you can get hold of, there is nothing he can be caught by

Clive : A track always seems to suggest a habit as well

S: Yes

Murray : If you always go into new areas you never actually get out any habits

S: Yes. It's like one is reminded of it by various items in the news recently. High ranking politicians and big business executives are advised not to go to work, by car that is to say, of course, by the same route every day. Now why is that? (laughter)

v: because some evil karma will catch up with them (laughter)

S: The gunman may get them, yes. So to the extent you leave a regular track, you are vulnerable. So we leaving our regular track in the form of karma are sort of vulnerable to Mara. Mara can get you. He knows exactly where to find you. It is just like the poacher, the man who is out to catch rabbits in the countryside. How does he do it? He finds out the rabbits runways because there are places along which the rabbits [9] always run. So that is where he sets snares. He knows that sooner or later a rabbit is going to run into these snares. So it is just like that To the extent that you are creatures of habit, you are sort of vulnerable, Now of course one mustn't overdo this. I mean there are certain habits which are sort of karmically neutral. I mean for instance the fact that you brush your teeth every morning, Well in a sense it is a habit, but you could just as well brush them every afternoon. You could probably change the habit quite easily. But a habit is something, I mean a regular way of doing things which is in consonance with your being, your limited condition of being and which is, as it were, almost compulsive and that you don't like to change... you don't want to change, that you won't change it. So this is an aspect of reactivity. It suggests a certain lack of creativity, a lack of adaptability, a lack of flexibility. So a Buddha is free from these routine compulsive patterns of behaviour and thought and being. So he cannot be tracked. It also means that a Buddha cannot be defined. he is beyond thought, beyond understanding. So these are apparently simple statements made in this verse about the Buddha but they mean quite a lot. It is probably salutary to bear in mind, to remember that the Buddha cannot as it were be traced even by the words that he himself speaks say in the scriptures taken as just words or taken as just ideas... One has to place oneself very much in harmony with what the Buddha says and try to feel one's way through to the inner meaning through personal experience of the Buddha. Otherwise you may think that by reading the words of the Buddha you just know all about the Buddha. You don't. You are as far away as ever as like as not. It could perhaps be mentioned that by virtue of his conquest of the passions, the expectations, the Buddha is often referred to as the Jina, the conqueror. You notice that the word here is jitam, for conquest. So the Buddha is called the conqueror, the victor, the Jina, and in some Buddhist text, this title is used very commonly. This whole question of conquest and permanent conquest is of course connected with the idea of Stream entry and irreversibility. I mean Stream entry being the point at which we become no longer liable to fall back into the lower, the reactive spheres of existence. We develop some Insight,

Murray: In relation to this Stream entrant, I have heard it said that in the Order it is possible for a person to be a stream entrant and not realize it.

S: to be a stream entrant and not realize it? Well obviously that depends on what you mean by realize.



Murray : Well I took that as meaning they were unaware of the fact that they were irreversible in terms of their spiritual progress.

[10]

S: Well unaware? Again, what does one mean by unaware?

Murray: I suppose it is that they didn't recognize the fact that they were Stream entrant. That a person is pretty irreversible in terms of their spiritual progress but personally they are unaware of that fact.

S: Well again, it comes down to the question of words. If you are say a Stream entrant, all right, well what has made you that? A measure of Insight, your insight into what? Well, you have broken the first three fetters. So can you be unaware having broken those fetters? Is it possible to be unaware of breaking those fetters? In other words unaware of the fact that that is the way that you see things. Take the first, the sakayaditthi, the self-view. All right, we won't go into the exact meaning of the term at the moment, self-view is a fetter. When you become a Stream entrant you break that self-view, So can you do that without being aware of what you have done?

Murray: I don't think So.

S: That would seem not to be possible. Whether you know from your reading that this is what Buddhists call or what in Buddhism is called Stream entry, that is another matter. That is just a matter of words. But you know that in yourself, that whereas before you saw things in a certain way in terms of self-view, now you no longer see things in that way. So you cannot be unaware of that. And so for the other fetters. So you may not be acquainted with certain technical terms for your state and for your experience but you are quite aware of that state and of that experience itself. So this what I say, it is just a matter of words. So you cannot be a Stream entrant without realizing it, unless you use the word realize to mean simply being acquainted with certain technical terms. You must know in the nature of your own experience and realization whether you are able to make this correctly in terms of your Buddhist tradition or not. But you know if someone were to ask you "what is your experience" and you were to explain that, well, to anybody who knew the Buddhist scriptures it would be obvious then that you were a Stream entrant. And you'd say "well that is what we call Stream Entry" and they'd say "Well that is what it is I suppose. See what I mean?"

Murray: Yes, that's clear.

S: So there is a confusion I think about this word realize and about this word aware. But awareness is an inherent part of the experience itself, so you cannot be unaware of it as an experience... although, using the word aware in another way... you may not be aware that that particular experience of which you are very much aware is called in Buddhism, stream entry. I mean, suppose that someone didn't know the Pali term for Stream [11] Entry, although they knew the Chinese term. Well I don't know what the Chinese term for stream entry is, let's say it is Pah Wong. (laughter) "Have you experienced Pah Wong?" (laughter) and you'd say, well no I don't know anything about that" But the experience could have been going on all the time, none the less. So we mustn't be misled by words. The same with the dhyanas. One may not know the word dhyana, but it doesn't mean to say he hasn't got any dhyana experience. Well ... if Order Members even make statements like that, don't hesitate to cross examine

them vigorously! (laughter) They may not have realized the extent of your ignorance for one thing (laughter) so reveal it in all its glory and let them clear it up!(laughter)

Right any further points arising out of that first verse? What sort of impression do you get from this first verse? About the Buddha. About Buddhahood, about enlightenment... do you get any sort of impression at all?

Cieron: It is really something glorious that soars way beyond. It gives a strong impression of the person who composed those verse too. a sort of inspired devotion. The devotion, one believes, inspires his followers.

S: Yes, of course it comes out much more powerfully in the Pali. I'll just read the Pali to see if we can get some sort of feeling for it.

Yassa jitan n'avajiyati,

jitam assa no yati koci loke,

tan Buddham anantagocaran,

apadankena padena nessatha?

It sounds a bit different doesn't it.?

Clive: What it puts me in mind of that aphorism by Blake "see the whole universe in one grain of sand"...you feel that the Buddha is the whole universe in the shape of a human being.

S: Yes, The "awakened one whose sphere is endless". But you notice also that the language is very simple. It translates into English quite untechnically. So there is conquest, sphere, endless, pathless, these are quite simple English words really aren't they? There is nothing very technical here but the meaning is quite adequately conveyed as far as words go. The Pali actually is even simpler. You can see, just if you look how few Pali words there are compare with the English, All right. Let's go on then. Would someone like to read that next verse?

v. 190: "In whom there is not that entangling, embroiling craving to lead any life, - that pathless Buddha of unlimited sphere, by what path will you trace?"

S: The third and fourth lines of this verse are the same as the third [12] and fourth of the previous verse, but the first two lines are different "Yassa jalini visattika, tanha natthi kuhinci netave" Tanha of course is craving. In the previous verse assa has been used, meaning expectation. In this verse tanha or craving or rather thirst is used, suggesting that the two terms are really synonymous. Tanha is a very common word indeed in Buddhism. The Sanskrit is trsna. This is one of the terms you really need to know in the original. Tanha or trsna, literally thirst, could be translated less literally as craving, but not as desire. Why do you think desire is not an adequate, or correct even, translation.?

Murray: It seems to me desire is more specific. You desire sex or desire possessions, whereas craving is like it is almost primordial, it is just like an instinct that drives you through.

S: Yes. Also of course, craving is invariably unskilful, whereas desire may be skilful or it may be unskilful because you can speak of the desire for nirvana. I mean sometimes people who read about Buddhism and who read for instance in some books that Buddhism teaches the destruction of desire think that they've really caught Buddhism out on a contradiction because they say "well, don't you desire Nirvana? So what about the... (Break in the tape) Desire has been used to translate *tr̥sna* instead of craving. For instance there is a Pali term *chanda*, which is urge or desire and this can be either positive or negative. The Buddha distinguishes for instance between *kamachanda* and *dhammachanda*. *Kamachanda* is the desire for sensuous pleasure and *dhammachanda* is the desire for the spiritual life itself. The same word *chanda* is used. So this corresponds to desire, the one skilful, the other unskilful. But *tr̥sna* or *tanha*, craving or thirst is always unskilful. Therefore should not be translated by desire, otherwise we involve ourselves in contradictions. But it's a very powerful word and you get it for instance in the *nidana* chain. In dependence upon *vedana* there arises *tanha*, thirst or craving. You get it also in the formula of the four Noble Truths. What is the cause of suffering? The cause of suffering is *tanha*, thirst or craving.

So it does indicate this very powerful or primordial sort of drive of procreation. I mean ... if a man is dying of thirst, what is his attitude towards water? He'd do anything to get water. So if you're in that sort of mental state, that sort of emotional state, you'd do absolutely anything to get whatever it is you want. This is craving. This thirst. And it's usually for continued conditioned existence, continued personal existence itself. You just want to go on being you. You cannot bear any threats to your so-called individuality. That's why perhaps, you don't want to [13] change. That's why, perhaps, you don't want to change. Why you want to go on keeping up the same reactive pattern that is you. That you are at present. And this of course is *sakkaya-ditthi*. *Sakkaya-ditthi* is the more intellectual way of looking at it - self view, you hang on to yourself you just want to be you. However unglorious you might be. It reminds me of something George Bernard Shaw said. I think it was about Frank Harris. Some of you might have heard of Frank Harris who wrote a sort of rather frank autobiography and was a sort of hanger-on in literary circles. Someone said about Frank Harris, "He's only a third rate writer", and George Bernard Shaw said, "He's not third rate, he's not fourth rate, he's not fifth rate, he's not even tenth rate. He's just his own unique, horrible self". (laughter) So that's what you want to cling on to : your own unique horrible self. You don't want to improve it, you don't want to change it, you just want it as it is... to go on with it. And if that is threatened you react violently. So there is a thirst and craving just to be yourself, to appropriate all those things which enable you to remain in existence. On the physical level, food and drink and on the mental and emotional level the objects of your habitual indulgence and the things which satisfy or fit in with your present conditioned way of thinking, all your reactive patterns and so on. So, thirst or craving is something very, very powerful. So we shouldn't translate *tanha* or *tr̥sna* just as desire, which is a relatively neutral word. You can have skilful desires and unskilful desires, but thirst or craving can never be skilful. So here that word is used. And the word is accompanied by a couple of epithets. Speaking of the Buddha, "in whom there is not that entangling, embroiling craving.", this is how Buddhadasa translates it. So *tanha* is *jalini*. *Jala* is a net. You know what a net is of course. So *jalini* is one who possesses or who is equipped with a net. So you could translate it as that or this: Net-equipped, or net-possessing craving. So why is craving represented as possessed of a net or equipped with a net? What does that suggest?

Murray: A bird or an animal or even a fish in a net, just gets tangled up and it struggles making it get more tangled still.

S: Yes. So craving is of such a nature that it captures you, it entangles you just as if it was equipped with a net. You know that from your own experience, that if you get into any situation and craving starts operating powerfully for one reason or another, then you really do get entangled. You're really in the net then aren't you? You know that from your own experience of various kinds. And then, Visattika. Visattika means adhering to, being attached to or as translation here has it, "embroiled with". So in the Buddha there is not that sort of craving which nets, which embroils [14] you...'In whom there is not that entangling, embroiling, craving to lead to any life" The text say simply, "which leads"... which leads to any future conditioned state, which leads to any rebirth. So, in the Buddha there is no trace of that kind of craving which is likely, well which in fact is certain, on account of its entangling, embroiling nature, to lead you into a further state of conditioned existence or in terms of Karma and Rebirth, in a future life. That kind of craving does not exist in the Buddha. He is free from that.

But looking at it in very general terms that is to say, not in terms of Karma and Rebirth, it represents a state in which... well you don't make thing worse. You don't make them more embroiled or more confused than they already are. You don't contribute to further conditionality. You find this with some people. Supposing there is a situation involving a number of people. Its a quite confused, turbulent, embroiled situation. Another person comes into that problem from outside. Well, very often they'll just make things worse than ever, even though, maybe, they're trying to help, trying to clear things up. But they just make things worse. So this is what usually happens. Because of the presence of the craving in us we make the situation worse for ourselves and for others. But in the case of the Buddha, he doesn't do that at all - there is no craving, no thirst, no tanha. So the Buddha will increasingly clarify the situation, make it better and better and will not store up any sort of conditioned existence for himself in the future. Probably most of you have the experience of being in a certain situation, trying to get out of it or do something with it or in it, but on account of your own subjective mental state your are just making things worse and worse. There is a comparison in one of the Buddhist texts: It's like a man who is tied up and the more he struggles, the more he tightens the bonds. It is a bit like that. So the Buddha is not in that sort of state at all ... so "in whom there is not that entangling, embroiling craving to lead to any life" to any future state of conditioned existence. "That pathless Buddha of unlimited sphere, by what path will you trace?" You cannot trace him or track him by the path of his craving. He is gone beyond all this.

Murray: It's quite curious that you say that desire, in a sense is almost ...can become neutral or even skilful, whereas craving is inherently unskilful. Whereas I understand that in the Nidanas, the chain of conditioned existence, desire arises in dependence upon craving.

S: No I think you are thinking of clinging, upadana. What I am trying to do is find English words to reflect a distinction in the Pali. You see what I mean? In Pali for instance, you've got the word tanha and you [15]have got the word chanda. Tanha is always used in a negative sense, therefore we want an English word which cannot have a positive meaning. Now we cannot use desire, because in English we can give desire a quite positive meaning, because we can speak of the desire for Nirvana, the desire for Enlightenment - that's quite all right. But in Pali you never speak of having tanha for enlightenment or trsna for enlightenment. so the word desire will not do as a translation, the word thirst or craving is appropriate. But again, in Pali, you've got this word chanda which can be used in a skilful sense, that is to say with regard to skilful objects, or on an unskilful sense. So we want an English word of that nature

which can be used in a skilful sense and which can be used in an unskilful sense. Therefore the word "desire" is appropriate. See what I mean? I'm trying to sort out English words which reflect differences of Pali words Therefore differences of Buddhist thought. so in the nidana chain the word chanda is not used. You've got the word trsna, which is "craving" and you've got the word upadana which is "clinging on to". In dependence upon vedana there arises tanha. In dependence upon sensation, the pleasurable sensations, especially, there arises tanha, thirst or craving. In dependence on the thirst or craving there arises upadana, which is better to say "clinging", which is a more persistent, more settled form of tanha. It's even worse than tanha, you can say. But there is not word used here in Pali equivalent to our English word desire, which can be used in either a positive or a negative sense. It is a matter of sorting out one's terminology. It is a question of sorting out one's terminology, first of all by making sure what the Pali terms are and then finding appropriate English expressions. And of course translators differ. You might decide to translate tanha as "craving" but you will find translators who render it as "desire". But I would say that that is undesirable because as I've said, for the word tanha you need a word in English which has got no positive connotations, which has got only a negative connotation. Though some people nowadays may even say, "Well, cravings are a good thing"... But leaving that aside, traditionally, in English, craving has not got any positive connotations.

Murray: It seems then that one has to be careful... almost like it appears that the tendency is in translating Pali into English that it is oversimplified.

S: Yes, So it sounds more negative than it actually is. I mean, if you make the statement, "According to Buddhism you've got to get rid of desire" Well what is that? What about the desire for the spiritual life itself? So you've got to be very cautious and watch that term. So this is why, as I say, those people that try to catch Buddhists out, saying that "well, you're [16] illogical. According to your religion you're better to commit to suicide because you don't believe in desire of any kind. How can you live without desire? How can you follow the spiritual path without desire?" Well, they are perfectly correct. You cannot. But it is not desire that we are trying to get rid of, it is craving, it is thirst in the sense of tanha, or trsna, which is rather a different thing. And you are encouraged in fact, in Buddhism to develop desire, well, desire for Skilful mental states.

Clive: What about passion? I know sometimes they use the word passion. Is that in a sense as a synonym for trsna or for craving or is it yet another negative term?

S: If one is concerned with the Pali t-texts, one has got for instance in the first verse, assa which is more literally, hope or expectation translated here as passions. It is definitely meant in a negative sense. Another word which is translated as passion is raga. When raga occurs in Pali it is always in the negative sense. But you know the English word itself, passion, is like desire. You can use it positively and it can be used negatively. You can speak, I mean Christians sometimes speak of a passion of righteousness. That is quite legitimate. So one has to be careful with the word passion. Passions in the plural, I think, in English is almost always negative. "His mind was defiled by passions..." You see? But passion in the singular can be either positive or negative. And this is the case also with raga. In Sanskrit, in some Vajrayanic literature, mention is made of maha raga, the great passion, the passion for enlightenment. The Vajrayana uses expressions like that. In Pali you don't get such expressions. They would not speak of a passion for enlightenment, would not speak of Bodhi raga, or maha raga, but in the Vajrayana, yes. So again we have to be on our guard, depending on the language from

which we are translating and the yana which is our specific context. so ... what was the original question?

v: I think that it was in early talks you used the term passion in very definitely a negative context. It seemed to be equivalent to neurotic desire.

S: Yes well if for instance I was talking about the Eightfold Path and therefore basing myself on Pali texts, well yes, I would use then the word passion or passions in a negative sense, but if I was talking about the Vajrayana and using the English word passion, I'd very likely be using it in a highly positive sense. Well. I think one has to be careful not to use these English words, which can be either positive or negative, use them in talking about Buddhism, as though they could only have [17] a negative meaning. Otherwise you know you create an impression that the spiritual life itself is a purely negative and to that extent, very one-sided process. I mean, in the Vajrayana even anger is used in a positive sense. In Pali, to the best of my recollection, krodha or anger is never used in a positive sense. It is always a mental defilement, something to be got rid of. But in the Vajrayana, krodha or anger or wrath is used in a highly positive sense, almost that aspect of enlightenment which burns away, blasts away, everything which is conditioned. So one hasn't only to be aware of the nuances of the English language and the meaning of the Pali or Sanskrit words one is translating, but also of the yana with which one is dealing, the type of Buddhism with which one is dealing. Supposing someone says to you, supposing you are taking a class and someone puts the question "Are Buddhists supposed to get rid of all passion?" Well, that is a very ambiguous question. So you have to say "Well, if by passion you mean certain negative mental states like craving and hatred, well yes. You have to get rid of them. But if by passion you mean a wholehearted aspiration after something, i.e. enlightenment, well that sort of passion, according to Buddhism, you don't have to get rid of. But you cannot just make a straightforward answer without distinguishing in that sort of way. Anyway I think actually we'd better stop for a break,

...

The use of jargon, I have commented for instance that in a recent news letter the expression "sitting" was used. Well, some one is going to say, "Well on the retreat we spent a lot of time sitting". (laughter) You see? The average person reading that will just think you mean sitting down, not sitting in meditation. So you should say when writing for the general public, sitting in meditation or meditating. There is another one I've discovered in this class, but I can't think of it off-hand. So be very aware of the person to whom you are speaking and don't use to an unfamiliar person, to a new person the sort of jargon that is intelligible to someone who has been in the Movement a long time. In other words we've lost the awareness of the fact that we've started using words in a somewhat different way to what they're usually used. Anyway let's get on with the text.

v. 181: "those wise ones, given to meditation, delighting in the calm of renunciation, - such mindful, wholly awakened ones, even the gods hold dear."

S: We notice in many of the Pali texts, especially what seem to be the early ones that words are used very effectively. Now you notice that in that first verse, in the Pali, Buddham is printed with a capital B, but of course in none of the oriental alphabets is there a distinction between upper and lower case. Do you see what I mean?

[18]

In Nagari or in Burmese script or in Thai script or in Sinhalese script, all the letters are of the same size, there's no capital letters. So they cannot capitalise Buddha as is done here, Buddha is printed in Roman. So when you capitalise Buddha this subtly modifies the meaning. It suggests that Buddha is a sort of special term. And in this verse the word "dhira" translated "wise ones", that is not capitalised. But actually in some Pali texts Buddha, the enlightened one or Awakened One and Dhira, the Wise one are used interchangeably. Later on, the Buddha, as we know him, came to be called more, the Buddha, but that wasn't always the case in early times. So we have to be aware of this sort of fluidity in the Buddhist texts very often. Later, Buddhists became a bit select and emphasized this term rather than that term, but that was not always the case in the early days, so that "dhira, the wise ones" about whom this verse is speaking are the same sort of people as the Buddha, the Awakened One of the first verse. In fact you'll see in the last line a new term, "Sambuddha" is introduced, but we'll get on to that in a minute.

So "Ye jhanapauta dhira..." Jhana is of course dhyana in Sanskrit. I mean some of these words we need to know in Pali and Sanskrit to know what the text is talking about. So jhana is the same as the Sanskrit dhyana, which is the same as Ch'an or Zen. The Zen school is the Ch'an school or the Chan-na school, the dhyana or jhana school. these are all the same words. The Chinese took over the Sanskrit word dhyana and turned it into Chan-na. It is not a Chinese word, it is their attempt to say dhyana. The nearest they could get was Chan-na. And then the Japanese turned that into Zen-an. Anyway, jhana is dhyana and as of course you know there are eight of these, but we need not go into that.

So, "those wise ones who are given to" or inclined to or devoted to "meditation". So you have got two things here. We've got the wisdom as it were and the dhyanic experience. In other words you have got the samatha, the calm and the vipassana, or the insight. So you notice that the wise ones, who are synonymous with awakened or enlightened ones are given to jhana. this is rather interesting in the light of the fact of some people speaking in terms of "dry" vipassana. Here the two things go very much together. It is the wise who are devoted to jhana, not devoted to meditation or given to meditation, as this translation has it. They are given to the experience of the jhana states. They're naturally inclined to the experience of the jhana states. For them the jhanas are not a problem. So those wise ones, given to meditation, delighting in the calm of renunciation". Well here we get one of these ambiguous words "rati". They are those who delight. Rati is delight. Rati can be used both in a negative and positive sense in Pali. It is used by very often [19] itself in the sense of craving. Rati is one of Mara's three daughters for instance. Very often it is delight in worldly things, delight in sensuous things... but you also have dhammarati, delight in the Dharma. And here you have got "delighting in ... the calm of renunciation." So clearly delight is not a wholly negative term. It can be used in a highly positive sense. So supposing someone asks you, "well, are Buddhists for delight or against delight?" Well it depends ... delight in what? In another verse it is said using the same word rati or a word connected with it, that the wise take delight in life in the forests. So "those wise ones" given to experience of the dhyana states and delighting in nekkhammupasame. Nekkhamma is also quite an important Pali word corresponding to the Sanskrit (niskama?) Any one familiar with this word? Ever heard of niskama karma yoga? Anyone studied the Bhagavad Gita? So niskama means desire-less. So some times the Bhagavad Gita teaches karma yoga, that is to say the yoga of the desire-less. The performance of action, that is to say, the performance of action in the sense of duty with out any subjective personal interest... just for the sake of the welfare of the world. So this

word desire-less, desire here being used or kama here being used in the negative sense is a quite common word in India, in Indian religious circles now. It corresponds to the Pali nekkhamma So, Nekkhamma is usually translated as giving up or renunciation. Its got that sort of connotation in the Pali. Its a sort of the natural disinterest you feel in worldly things when you start becoming interested in spiritual things. Its not a forcible giving up or tearing of yourself away. Its more like disinterestedness. You're just not interested any more. So the text speaks of "delighting in the calm of renunciation", Well you delight in the calm of disinterestedness. If you've got all sorts of worldly interests your mind can be really stirred up, really agitated. But when you no longer have those worldly interests your mind becomes calm. And the wise person, described here takes delight in that calm state of mind Which you experience when you are free from all worldly interests.

Clive. It seems to link back into the dhyana states again, because even weak experiences of dhyanic states, it sort of casts worldly pleasures into a shadow quite strongly.

S: Yes you see in the case of a lot of people when they don't have anything in particular to do of a worldly nature, well in a sense their minds become calm in a sense that they don't have anything to actively occupy their minds with of a worldly nature. There is nothing to do. There is nothing to see about or to see after. But they don't enjoy that calm state. They don't delight in that calm state. They're not very happy with it. They experience it as something rather unpleasant and they look around for something to do. Some people have this experience on solitary retreat. Or if you've [20] been a very busy active Order member, if you've been especially a chairman and very accustomed to all sorts of things to think about, all sorts of duties and responsibilities. If you are suddenly taken away from all that and you find yourself on your own. Well far from enjoying a calm state of mind if you are not very careful you may find yourself a bit uncomfortable or even tormented. You know to be without your activities and responsibilities. So it is not enough just to have a calm state of mind and in any case the calm state has got to go far beyond the ordinary calm state, but you've got to take delight in that calm state and really enjoy it. Enjoy the fact that you've got no work and no responsibilities and no worldly interests of any kind, not even of a skilful nature, not to speak of an unskilful nature. So this is a very important expression Nekkhammupame rata: they those wise they are those who delight in the calm of disinterestedness That is to say, the calm that arises out of disinterest in any worldly things or all worldly things.

So such mindful, wholly awakened ones, even the Gods hold dear" The Pali is in the reverse order : The gods themselves, even the gods hold dear are affectionately disposed towards those fully enlightened mindful ones. Let's take it the way round that the translation gives it. "such mindful" satimatan, that is quite literally just mindful. Sati here again maybe we come across differences in translation. Sati. This word sati in Pali is very important. The sammāsati is the seventh step of the Eight fold Path. So what do you understand by sati? Do you know the literal meaning of sati? It is recollection. It is in a way memory or calling to mind. So the English word recollect is quite significant . It is to re-collect. So if things are not collected, what are they?

v : Scattered.

S: They are scattered. So usually the contents of the mind so to speak are in a scattered state. So you re-collect them. You recollect them or you are recollected. So you can see the connection also with mindfulness. Mindfulness being "full of mind" you can say is a further



stage of development in the same direction. So being fully collected or re-collected, this is to be "sati" satimatan or as it is translated here mindful. Sometimes the etymology of words can give us a clue to their real meaning Such as recollect, re-collect, mind - full, when you are mindful everything that you do is imbued with mind, with mind in the sense of awareness. Everything that you do is full of awareness. Not as Something sort of superimposed upon what you do, but as permeating it wholly throughout. You don't just stand aside from yourself and watch yourself. You are in yourself and with yourself while you're doing something. The mindfulness is not a sort of extra quality. It is something that saturates the whole [21]of what you do and which is indistinguishable from it. Distinguishable from it only in thought. If it is distinguishable from it in fact, you are alienated. The true mindfulness is distinguishable from what you are actually doing and being mindful of only in thought, not in fact.

v: It feels that it gives what you are doing logic?, it gives it form.

S: Yes, It is inside in a sense ... more than it is outside. It is filling it from within - not looking at it or on to it from without.

Clive: So it is really the complete opposite of that sort of modern vipassana that satipatthana where it completely destroys our natural flow and chops things up.

S: Yes. It saturates the flow - it is like a colour being given to the flow.

So, "Such mindful, wholly awakened ones" so you see here even that Sambuddha, wholly awakened, wholly enlightened is synonymous with dhira or with Buddha in the first verse. It could be that the expression "Sambuddha", Sambuddhanan is plural, is used rather than Buddha just for the sake of the metre. You have got to bear that in mind too. This is poetry, this is verse and there's a metre. So sometimes you've to fill out the metre and whether you use this word or that depends as much on the metre as anything. So all this goes against or makes against rigidity. You don't always have exactly the same term. It isn't necessary that Buddha has one definite, clear meaning and Sambuddha has a quite different equally clear meaning. They're used a bit loosely.

v: It seems a pity that the word Buddha has got to be a label as

opposed to a d-finite description.

S: yes, you could just as well say, the Jina or the Tathagata. There are many different expressions.

Clive: It seems that when someone's really precise over the use of language then at the same time it frees them to be very poetic. It's really when somebody's very vague they cannot afford to be poetic.

S: Yes . they become pedantic. The pedantic person is really vague. They are not in contact with the origin, the springs of their own thought. They are just going according to the words. So they cannot afford to depart from the words. Hence they are very pedantic. I mean to go back to the Chinese translations from the Sanskrit. The two greatest translators were Kumarajiva, who wasn't a born Chinese at all he was from Central Asia and [Huan-Chuan?] and their styles of translation, we are taught were completely different. Kumarajiva's were

very sweet, very poetic, very [22] inspiring. Huan Chuang's were very faithful, very accurate, very precise and scholarly. Kumarajiva's translations were much more popular than those of Huan-Chuang. For instance, his translation of the Diamond Sutra is the standard one which is chanted in monasteries and temples and so on. But if you wanted actually to study carefully and try to find out what the actual Sanskrit texts said or get a bit close to the Sanskrit texts, the words of the scriptures as distinct from the spirit, you have to rely on Hsuan-Chuang. The scholars prefer him. Whereas the man in the street so to speak the Buddhist in the monastery, in the temple, the Buddhist in the street, the average Buddhist, he prefers Kumarajiva. The language is more alive, more poetic more inspiring in every way. But maybe we need different translations for different purposes. There is quite a struggle going on in Finland, I gather at present, between different schools of translators and this influences even the FWBO. Some of them are what I call the scientific translators and the others are the literary translators. They cannot stand it ! They really hate each other's guts! (laughter) Not so much in the FWBO, but certainly outside. They will just not consider each other's translations. They consider each other wholly wrong, wholly mistaken. The more literary translators label the scientific translators as dry, technical, pedantic, the more scientific translators label the literary ones as silly, sentimental, old-womanish, et cetera. And there seems to be no way of reconciling them. So this concerns me very much. I mean some of my own talks and writings have been translated into Finnish and this question invariably arises. And only half the translators are usually pleased. Very very rarely does anything strike a sort of balance of ---?---. They almost have developed, I gather, in modern Finnish, two different sorts of languages. One's used by the technocrats and the others used apparently by the old fashioned literary people. We don't have that sort of distinction in English. Language is quite important. Anyway... "such mindful, wholly awakened ones, even the Gods hold dear." You see gods has got a capital G, no capital g in the text. So who are these gods? What does it mean?

Murray: It is a reflection on the universal significance of enlightenment, of the Buddhas attainment, even beings on a very high spiritual level respect the Buddha.

S: Ah! Spiritual levels. There's an ambiguity here isn't there? In the use of the word spiritual. Because the Devas, according to Buddhist tradition are still included in the Wheel of life, they haven't freed themselves from the Wheel of Life. They're included in conditioned [23]existence. They are not necessarily on the Path. Though you can have a Deva who is making spiritual i.e. transcendental progress. But usually the Deva are said to inhabit so to speak, inverted commas, "worlds" which are the objective correlates of those subjective states called jhanas. So that, according to tradition, when you attain a jhana subjectively, objectively you enter a certain world and may even communicate with the devas of that world. So, if you are given to meditation, that is to say, given to the jhanas or jhana experience it is only natural that you should be dear to the gods. You are in contact with the gods. That is another way of saying the same thing. Do you see what I mean? So one can in a sense take this quite literally. It is as though you can think of the jhanas either as abstract states as it were abstract states which you experience or impersonal states which you experience or as devas, personal beings whom you encounter. You can think of it in both those sort of ways. I mean some people are so psychologically constituted that they experience everything personally, everything is a person. You find this with children too. A child, very often, can treat something an adult regards as inanimate as not only animate but as a person. He experiences it as a person, so it's as though you can do that also with regards to the dhyana states. You don't just experience an impersonal state but you find yourself in contact with, so to speak a person, even that you see as a sort of shining form and that you hear. It is the same kind of experience basically, but you

experience it in a different sort of way. It is a sort of visionary experience. Well, we know that some of our friends are more prone to this than others. They don't just experience impersonal dhyanic states, they have visions and they encounter as if it were persons or beings it is the same thing. In some ways it is a richer and more interesting experience. So if you are immersed in devoted to given to dhyanic states of course yes you could say the gods would hold you dear...

End of Tape

[24] But the emphasis is different in Pali in this verse because the word order is different. If I was to give it in English in the order that it has in the Pali, it would be: those given to meditation ones, those wise ones, those ones who delight in the calm of renunciation, even the gods hold dear, those fully enlightened, those mindful ones". You see the emphasis falls differently. The emphasis, the culmination of the whole sentence is "those mindful ones", not "even the gods hold dear." You see what I mean? So when you are translating you must be very careful in arranging your clauses to arrange them in accordance with the way in which they're arranged in the original because the way that the clauses are arranged affects the emphasis. Here the emphasis falls on "those mindful ones", not on "even the gods hold dear". Even the gods hold dear" is relatively incidental.

Murray: It makes out that the gods are somehow some sort of very high spiritual sort of beings.

S: Yes. So it should be "even the gods hold dear" or "the gods themselves hold dear ... those fully awakened, those mindful ones" It means that the culmination is in "mindful ones". Just a few words before we pass on to the next verse . Piyayanti, "holds dear". Piya is affection and this can be used either in a positive or in a relatively negative sense. Here it is clearly conditioned and mundane, because the gods themselves are conditioned and mundane, but none the less skilful rather than unskilful. All right, next verse.

Clive: "It is difficult to be born as a man; hard is the life of mortals difficult is to get opportunity of hearing the Sublime Truth. Difficult is the arising of Awakened Ones".

So, Kicchu - kiccho manussa ... patilabho". Buddhadatta renders this as "It is difficult to be born as a man", which just does reflect the meaning but literally though it is "it is difficult to attain the human state". The text doesn't say anything about "being born", but that doesn't really matter. So what do you think this means?

Murray: Well it is difficult to develop those qualities that pertain to a truly human life.

S: It is difficult to be a human being. This is what ... the text itself doesn't refer to being born, i.e. reborn as a human being. I mean this raises all sorts of questions as to animal birth or rebirth and so on. Other texts of course do speak in this sort of way. But this doesn't. It is difficult to be a human being, this is the literal meaning. It is difficult to attain to the human state. Well according to what Subhuti was saying last night it isn't easy even to be an apeman. (laughter) It's certainly not easy to be a pagan man. So it is difficult to attain to the [25] human state. So whether we see that within the context of karma and rebirth or whether we see it with the context simply of this life, it is true. "it is difficult to be a human being". I have often mentioned in the past that we shouldn't take it for granted that we are human beings,

just because we've got a mouth, nose, eyes and two eyes, well the apes have got those also don't they? They may be arranged slightly differently or not differently in some cases. So that is not enough. It is the human state that we are concerned with if we are really human beings, the mental state of a human being. So that makes, well we could say, that mental cum emotional state which makes a human being, that is very difficult to attain. I mean that really came out clearly in Subhuti's talk last night when he spoke of the ages upon ages for which we have been ape men and how very very recently we became civilized or cultured human beings. It was just a few hours ago, so to speak, just half an hour ago. So you scratch civilized man and you find if you are lucky pagan man underneath. Scratch pagan man there is the ape man underneath, lurking and sometimes it is a distorted ape man. so our sort of cruder and more primitive urges may go back far, far longer than our more refined emotions. But again we mustn't forget that there is so to speak, in Man what we can only describe very metaphorically, poetically as a sort of transcendental spark that doesn't belong to Time at all. You won't find it however far you go back because it is to be found on a completely different level. But at the same time it does belong to or pertain to Man. But it isn't easy for us to establish a real living contact with that, even though in a sense it is there all the time. I don't like to use this sort of substantialist language and it must be taken poetically but there seems to be no other language available.

So it isn't easy to be human being. It is difficult to be a human being. It is difficult to become a human being. So I have again sometimes said that before we start thinking in terms of spiritual life we must think in terms of being a healthy happy human being, if that is at all possible.

Mark: Isn't it important not just to see that in preparatory ways as something we can get over with and done with, achieving humanity and then we can go to concerts and read poetry and reach a certain level and then we can dump that... But rather that it is something at least in our culture most of us probably will always have to..

S: Not only that, but when you reach that higher state it is not that you pass on to any higher state leaving behind the lower state, the higher state incorporates the lower. It is like a snowball. It is a process of gradual incrementation, in a manner of speaking though even that metaphor can be misunderstood, so that you don't cease to be happy, human and healthy when you become enlightened. You are still happy, as happy as ever. You [26] are still happy and still healthy. You are more human than you ever were before. So you take up whatever you've experienced on the lower stages and you incorporate them in the higher stages, in your experience of the higher stages, very often in a more refined form. And you see this in the case of the Buddha if you look at what as the Buddha is usually represented as he appears in the pages of the Pali scriptures at least, the Buddha doesn't cease to be an impressive human being after he becomes Enlightened, in fact he becomes more impressive than ever. He doesn't cease to be, say tall and well built. He doesn't cease to have a beautiful glowing golden complexion, in fact it glows more than ever! You see all that is, as it were, taken up by the enlightened mind. It is not left behind. You cannot really distinguish means and ends in that sort of artificial way.

It could be of course that after becoming Enlightened you give up certain activities. You might not think of engaging in quite so much physical culture as before. You might have other things to do. And so also, any sort of unskilful mental element which was originally in your involvement with physical culture would be eliminated, obviously if you were

Enlightened. But none the less, you would be a healthy, Enlightened human being. Anyway how did we get on to that? Yes it being difficult to attain the human state. We shouldn't think that we are human beings.

So "Hard is the life of mortals", well its the same word again "difficult" or hard". Maccana is "those who die", that is to say mortals. Jivatan, if you want a word for it is their livelihood. So the life of mortals is hard" What do you think is meant by that? Is it hard, is it difficult?

v: it is unsatisfactory

S: It seems to suggest more than just unsatisfactory. It is not easy to get through as it were. Survival isn't very easy. The sort of things you need to get and work for you don't have an easy time of it. Say food and drink doesn't grow on trees. Clothing doesn't grow on trees. You don't have to build houses. Life is difficult especially living in a country with a cold, wet damp climate. Life can be difficult. There are all sorts of obstacles. And these suggest that to maintain your human state or to maintain the conditions necessary for the realization of your human state is also difficult. Yes? For instance when you practice Right Livelihood when you practise team-based Right Livelihood, it is not easy. Like when you are working in a Co-op. You could say that not only "hard is the life of mortals" but hard is the life of those who are engaged in team based Right livelihood projects. It is as though perhaps this a little fanciful though not altogether so. Perhaps the first line here, that "it is [27] difficult to be a human being", refers more to the subjective side of things. It is difficult to cultivate truly human mental states and attitudes. And perhaps that the second line, that is ... "that life of mortals is difficult" refers more to the objective side of things. It isn't easy to live in a way which is appropriate to a human being. Because that means that you need all sorts of facilities which Nature as such doesn't provide - you have to provide them for yourself. So life is hard, life is difficult. You have to work at least...

Murray: Going for Refuge... it seems quite literal. Take shelter from the storm I suppose

S: Yes

Murray: Unless some people do go for a positive reason but most people I have asked seem to be going because in the end they have had enough. They are just going for shelter.

S: Well this came out rather amusingly in a ... someone was telling us about a TV. programme, about life in a sort of a meditation centre in Thailand in the forest and they were interviewing some of the people there and a young, a very young monk was asked why he was there and he said "Well, life in the world was so difficult" And then he was asked "Well what would you be doing if you were living in the world?" and he didn't find it very easy to answer this, but anyway in the end he said "Well I'd be herding buffaloes" (laughter) Yes... presumably that wasn't very easy.

v: It seems that it is not the fact that it is any easier or any harder, it is just that it is getting nowhere. It is hard and it is getting nowhere. Whereas the storm of the spiritual life is seen in terms of progress, overall progress to the goal, which makes you feel as if you are getting somewhere for your efforts.

S: Yes Again, wasn't it Subhuti talking last night about people that one used to see around or

he's seen around recently, some very old people and he said ... oh he was talking about that village where one of his friends lives, that here are those people sort of waiting for death and they haven't even lived. So here was... you have worked so hard, you have held down a job, you have brought up a family and you have acquired a house and a car and all the rest of it and it has been such hard work for many people getting all these things together. But, at the end, what have they really achieved? Nothing, at all, Nothing. They cannot take it with them and in the process of acquiring it they have done perhaps serious harm and damage to themselves as human beings. [28] Limited their human potential. They are worse off than they were before. So they have had a difficult life, a hard life all to no purpose whatever as far as I can see. Whereas if you have had a hard time meditating or a hard time working in a Co-op, well yes it has been a hard time perhaps very hard sometimes, but still there is a definite gain. You have grown as a result.

So you know you could say therefore, "Hard is the life of mortals", if it is just a question of being born and getting by and surviving and then dying, well that really is a hard life if you have not got out of it anything more than that. If you have merely existed, you haven't lived. Then it says "Difficult is to get opportunity of hearing the Sublime Truth". Literally the hearing of the... of Saddhamma, the Real Truth, the True Teaching is difficult". Well it is. It is less difficult now perhaps than it was, objectively, just because there is so many translations of the Buddha's teachings, in so many languages. Communications are so greatly improved these days. It is rather difficult in Britain even, nowadays, not to hear about Buddhism or at least not hear of Buddhism or see some sort of evidence of it. Though you know to really hear in the sense of being receptive to it, that is of course quite another matter.

Murray: On the other hand too, even if you are receptive to ... being receptive to the right person, the right teacher, to the right Sangha in a sense, in certain respect it is a matter of luck almost.

S: Yes it seems like it.

Murray: You decide to get involved as by quite fortunate circumstances we are involved here. But a lot of other people got involved in situations in which, maybe, the teacher isn't so good. Where the Dharma is twisted as it were.

S: Well if one looks outside the Buddhist fold especially, one can see what all sorts of weird movements that people get caught up in. I mean when I was in Manchester I met a member of the community who had been believe it or not, a Moonie for a couple of years. Well he is an ex-Moonie now; he is a Friend. I am not sure if he is a Mitra yet, but any way he is certainly a regular Friend and community member.

v: I often think that maybe there is some unhealthy element in people which takes them in so deeply into a movement which is basically has got some basic wrong points.

S: But very often I think that that negative element is just weakness, impressionability or impressionableness, gullibility, not that they are [29] necessarily in a negative frame of mind in a more drastic sense, but they are just weak, impressionable, easily misled, very gullible, needing to belong to something, almost anything, so long as they can just belong and sort of be accepted. The weakness seems to be very often in that sort of area.

Mark: It does suggest however that in some ways some aspect of the friends should really almost cultivate itself to attract that sort of person because many of them, I think you could argue are really, well, if they are nurtured in a certain way they can get over this, well, something they never got as teenagers, they never got as twelve-year-olds to belong to a group - and if they aren't exploited at that stage they can get a certain strength from that.

S: Yes I think though that there are two points which emerge here in this connection. One is that the FWBO generally needs to make a much better effort to make itself known and to make itself available. Not wait so much for people to come along, you know, to you, but at least spread your name around a bit, because I'm sure there are many, many people who haven't heard of the FWBO, who would really benefit from it to a very great extent. They just haven't heard about it. Maybe they are looking for something, but they certainly haven't heard of us yet. We have kept, well in a sense deliberately for some years, certainly in the early stages a rather low profile for obvious reasons. We wanted to build ourselves up and have something to offer first. But we have got quite a lot to offer now. And I think therefore, that we should publicise ourselves in a positive way to a much greater extent.

Also we shouldn't in a sense, be too much bothered with the sort of people we get along. They're not going to be perfect. They are not even going to be very positive but at least if they come .. well that is the main thing. You have got to work on them and give to them and people can change. One has seen that. People coming along with all sorts of problems in a real mess. After a year or two they are straightened out. so don't just keep your eyes open for the really nice beautiful lovely "with it" sort of people in a really positive creative state. Well they probably wouldn't come along, they wouldn't need you ! People come along because they need something from you. So we mustn't sort of be disappointed if the sort of people that turn up are not the sort of people we'd really like to see perhaps. Well that is why they've come because they are in a bit of a state and they need whatever the FWBO has to offer.

So if they are a bit ..they don't communicate well or [30] they seem a bit negative or a bit aggressive or a bit withdrawn well that is no criticism of them really at all. We certainly shouldn't feel disappointed because that is the sort of people that come along. They are the sort of people who really need whatever it is we have to offer. So you could even say, you could even put it paradoxically and say the more messed up they are the more we should really welcome them! But that means taking a bit of interest and making quite an effort with them. I mean not just sort of ignoring them if they are not very prepossessing.

v: had the phrase: "we should help the strong, not the weak".

S: That is true ... yes, but I think we can afford to contradict ourselves (laughter) No, as regards the Centres and the public activities, work on everybody, yes? But where it is a question of more intensive work and getting people ready for ordination, well concentrate on those who are nearest to it because they will be able to help you helping all the others. This is the sort of thing that I meant. I mean, I compared it to training up doctors. Supposing you are a doctor, well you had better spend most of your energies in just training up other doctors and not yourself, trying to attend on all the thousands of patients that come along. I'm not saying that patients should be turned away. Yes let them come along and you will give them some provisional treatment, but in the meantime also get cracking with the training up of your doctors. Selecting some of the most promising patients and try to turn them into doctors... But it doesn't mean that you are going to turn away patients... you will just sort of keep them

marking time a bit or keep them happy ... until you have got more doctors to work with them more intensively. So the two things are not really contradictory.

But if it was an absolute choice then I think then you'd have to work exclusively with the strong rather than the weak. You know looking to the long term interests of everybody. But I think at present. we are beating out as a movement, we'll be able to do both, at least to some extent.

So "Difficult is to get opportunity of hearing the Sublime Truth. Difficult is the arising of the Awakened Ones." What is this arising of the Awakened ones?... Well it is difficult to become awakened, this is what it really means.

v: why is it plural? Awakened Ones.

S: Well it might be just for the sake of the metre, Buddhanan, plural. Or it may simply be to draw attention to the fact that it is not just a question of one person, one Buddha. It is a possibility even though [31] distant for all. You notice actually that the Pali texts, including the Dhammapada often speak of the Buddhas, whereas perhaps in modern Buddhism we would tend just to speak of the Buddha. As though there is the Buddha and then there is everybody else. But many Pali texts use a plurality of Enlightened Ones, the Buddha and his disciples, all those who follow the Teaching and realize the call of the Teaching. There is not just one Buddha with a capital B, there are lots of Buddhas. A republic rather than a monarchy, so to speak.

So It is difficult to become Enlightened. Well this follows on because it is difficult even to be a human being. If it is difficult to live, difficult to hear the Dharma, how much more difficult it will be to actually become Enlightened. It stands to reason.

Murray: Do you think that the Buddha's disciples like Moggallana and Mahakasyapa. people like that, could we call them Buddhas?

S: Well they are called Buddhas in some of the older of the Pali texts. The Buddha makes in fact in one place the statement that there is no difference between himself and his enlightened disciples in respect of the that they are experienced.{should read enlightened?} The only difference is of relative priority and posteriority of attainment. He attained Enlightenment first, they attained it afterwards by following his teaching. But later on, even with the Hinayana, there came to be, a distinction drawn between the Buddha and the Arhants and the attainment of the disciples came to be regarded as a lower attainment. And then of course the Mahayana was trying to as it were unify the goal for all again and said that Buddhahood was open to all and that one, in these operations, should not aim at Arhantship, the lower goal, but at Supreme Enlightenment, the higher goal. So they had to phrase things in that way because of the development that had taken place already in the Hinayana, and because also they did not have in those days an historical sense, they could not understand that the term Arhant had become, as it were, degraded in course of time, relatively speaking.

Murray: The impression I got too was that even though the Buddha said to that his chief disciples were his virtual peers, that they sort of all seemed to acknowledge the fact that he still had something extra.



S: Well yes, one does get that impression from the Pali scriptures. Maybe it was very difficult for them in those days. the Buddha was not only Enlightened, it seems as though he was a very commanding personality too. even quite apart from being a Buddha. If you see what I mean. He had more character than other, even if they were all equal as regards Enlightenment. You see? It is very difficult to understand these things [32] in a way, that can you have ... a more effective Buddha?

Clive: It could be I guess one thinks that the experience of Enlightenment is something completely other than any mundane characteristics. However, as far as other people are concerned a more effective personality or character can communicate experiences much better.

S: Yes It seems something like that; because it seems as though some of the Arhant disciples, some of the Enlightened disciples, hardly communicated at all. Perhaps they just didn't have that so to speak gift. But it must also be said that the Mahayana especially regards those sort of gifts that sort of equipment as regards communication, almost as an integral part of Enlightenment itself. It is as though the Mahayana seems to think "Well if you are really Enlightened you will be able to communicate" because if prajna is there karuna will be there too. So it isn't really an easy matter sort of to decide, to determine.

Mike: But this does seem to imply the later Mahayana view where the major Arhant disciples of the Buddha, Moggallana and Sariputra especially when they are sort of stereotyped as this Arhant negative sense then that is actually quite unjustified, it is just a figurative way of distinguishing, whereas, in fact, they are actually far closer to what the Mahayanists would have described as the samyak-sambuddha really.

S: Yes . though again one must remember that the Mahayana inherited this differentiation between the Buddha and the Arhant from the Hinayana. You see this was part of the material with which it started. And having this material to start with, having this distinction between Buddha and Arhant they plumped for Buddhahood and regarded Arhantship as a lower lesser goal.

Mike: One cannot then necessarily assume though that the original Buddhism of Sariputra and the Buddhist teachings is identifiable with and exactly the same as the Hinayana?

S: No one cannot, no the Hinayana itself, it seems had rather caricatured its own Arhants and the Mahayana took that over and it did the best it could, not having the modern historical sense, with that material and being concerned above all to get back to the, as we would say, the original spirit of the thing.

Clive: There seems to be some confusion ... at least I experience some confusion with just what an Arhant is supposed to be. You some people seem to almost despise an Arhant. Yet actually in a sort of as far as an immediate stage of mind is concerned, I guess you could say that the Arhant would be compared to someone who is wrapped up in his own experience however positive that might be, and the Bodhisattva is someone who is [33] aware of himself and of others. But in a sort of, in the sense that we're talking about Arhant, it is still quite a state to be achieved.

S: Oh yes, well, I've said, I have said think it is in the Survey or The Three Jewels that

Arhantship is lower than Supreme Buddhahood only in the sense that Mount Kanchenjunga is lower than Mount Everest. You still have to look up to Mount Kanchenjunga. I mean, you, as an unenlightened worldling, cannot afford to look down on an Arhant, if you see what I mean.

Clive: What I think about is that if you climb Kanchenjunga, you get to the top of it, but then you cannot just step on to Everest, if you see what I mean. If you follow the path of an Arhant, you may become Enlightened but you won't become enlightened in the Mahayana sense.

S: Yes, well in the Mahayana there is in a way a difference of opinion. Some Mahayanists regard Arhantship as an actual stage on the way to Supreme Enlightenment, say Buddhahood or rather they regard it, they regard Arhantship as capable of being a stage. That having become an Arhant you can sort of awake to the possibility of a further stage of development that you haven't been aware of before and then progress as a Bodhisattva to Buddhahood. But other Mahayanists or other Mahayana schools, don't see things in quite that way. They tend to see Arhantship as a sort of spiritual cul-de-sac. They seem to think that from the very beginning you have got to be careful not follow that path because once you have become an Arhant well yes you are Enlightened, you are delivered from the Samsara, but you have permanently precluded the possibility of that higher transcendental realization as a Buddha. So therefore they would say that even from the very beginning of your spiritual career you should aim at being a Supreme Buddha and not an Arhant and that to become an Arhant, from the point of view of Buddhahood is almost a mistake. So these are the two emphases within the Mahayana.

Clive: Which do you feel is ... do you think there is any truth in it?

S: Well one is up against different versions of the Arhant idea, but I would say if one looks at, if one looks at the Buddhist tradition as a whole and tries to do justice to all these different ideals, one should adopt more the more the Mahayana point of view, that it is Buddhahood that one is after. On the other hand one needs to be quite aware that the Arhants of the Pali texts are not the Arhants of the later Sanskrit works. And that at every level of the Path, every stage, you need to beware of spiritual individualism. It isn't simply sort of crystallized into the Arhant ideal. Spiritual individualism is a danger that may arise at any level of the Path. any stage of the Path.

But overall yes, I would say since we know about all these ideals and definitely Buddhahood is the highest of them, [34] one should aim at that and not think in terms of being an Arhant.

Clive: It would seem that an Arhant in that sense, is a person who cannot communicate the experience because he hasn't developed the power of communication

S: Well one does find in the Pali scriptures Arhants like Sariputra teaching quite successfully. But it would seem, even so in the Pali scriptures that the Buddha has by far the greater capacity. So perhaps the Buddha was in a way more Enlightened. I mean, it isn't easy to speak of 'more Enlightened' but again there are degrees one could say. Because it isn't as though Enlightenment is a sort of fixed full-stop. This is the way that we think of it but that is probably due to our mental limitations to think of it as a fixed state that you finally attain and stay in. Maybe that is to sort of try to find a track of the Buddha when there is in fact there is no track. Perhaps one should think more in terms of sort of, indefinite development that in a

way after a while you cannot track him any further. He goes out of sight. So that point at which it goes out sight you tend to think of as the actual Goal, which someone has sort of settled down in, which someone has reached. But actually it isn't so. So perhaps if one wanted to formulate the whole thing in most general terms I should simply say, "You should aim at the highest goal that you can possibly imagine but be open to the fact that the more you progress, the greater the goal will become. You'll see goals beyond that original goal". I mean it is just as someone said a few minutes ago. That when you go for Refuge the reason was, your intention was, just trying to find a shelter from the storms of the world. But once you have gone for Refuge, well may be once you have found that shelter, you'll find that there is more to it than that.

So it is not an easy question in the literal sense of "either you take up the ideal of Buddhahood or the ideal of Arhantship". It is really very difficult to get feeling of what they are like at all. You should think more in terms of "What is the highest ideal I could possibly imagine?" "Let me aim for that". Broadly speaking, yes, it is the ideal of Enlightenment or Buddhahood. But whether in terms of Buddhahood or in terms of Arhantship, it is not easy to say. we need not I think in the early stages of our spiritual life go into that too closely. But be prepared at all times to revise our conceptions of the highest goal in the light of our own higher and higher experience. It is just like that when you are mountaineering. You get to a certain peak and you see there are further peaks beyond which you didn't see when you started out. The higher you go the more you see. The higher you go, the higher you can go. So there is no need to aim absolutely at a fixed point. You aim at the highest [35] point that you can see. When you get there you'll see another point further on to aim at. So probably we should think of it more in that sort of way.

Murray: So in a sense Enlightenment is the beginning?

S: You can even look at it like that. It is the beginning of something that we cannot even think of now. So there is no point in trying. We cannot really think of Enlightenment. We can perhaps think of Stream Entry in an adequate sort of way. But Enlightenment is very difficult to think of in any way. So that is sometimes why I say, "Let people aim at Stream Entry - that is intelligible - they can understand that. That is something they can really aim at. The rest is probably just words. Well it is even difficult for many people to form an idea of what a human being is like, not to speak of a Stream Entrant, not to speak of a Buddha. It is not easy to imagine what a real human being is like, even an unenlightened one, even one who isn't a Stream Entrant. Healthy ! Even that isn't very easy to imagine. And Happy !, that is quite difficult too. And human ... Well there is quite a few people who haven't really ever seen or known anyone who is really healthy and happy. They might go for years and years without seeing anybody who is really healthy and happy. As distinct from just bouncing along in a boisterous sort of way; that is just animal high spirits. That is a bit different.

All right, there is just one more verse that we have got time for. It is a very famous verse.

v.183: "Not to do any evil, to cultivate good,

to purify one's thoughts

this is the teaching of the Buddhas"

S: Usually if you know any verse at all by heart from the Dhammapada, it is this one. "Sabbapapassa akaranan, kusalassa upasampada, sacitta pariyodapanan, ettan Buddhana sasanan." So let's translate it a little bit more literally. Sabbapapassa akaranan ... the non-doing of all evil. Papa, evil, that is quite straightforward. Then kusalassa upasampada. To cultivate good; it is really cultivation, is literally acceptance. The acceptance of all that is skilful, the making of one's own all that is skilful, 'kusala' you are familiar with the expression kusala aren't you kusala and akusala, the skilful and the unskilful? Skilful is traditionally defined as whatever is not associated with greed, hatred and delusion and unskilful is whatever is so associated.

The term in Pali for the so-called Higher Ordination, that is to say the ordination as a bhikkhu, is upasampada, it is the same word, is acceptance into the Spiritual Community, acceptance into the Order of Bhikshus. So, as I said, it is the same word, acceptance. So is the acceptance of all that is skilful not as translated here, not the cultivation of the skilful, the acceptance of the skilful, the [36] making of it part of oneself, the corporation of the skilful. It's oneself becoming an embodiment of the skilful, the embodiment of skilful states of mind, skilful emotions. The transformation of oneself into a more skilled individual.

Then Sacitta pariyodapanan. The purification of one's thoughts or one's own thoughts. The purification of one's thoughts, well one could say from all unskilful mental states. But that already has been covered by the previous verse. Usually it is said that the non-doing of all evil refers to the observance of sila...

End of Side

...This is a popular explanation. So you've got Sila, Samadhi, Prajna; they are the three stages of the Path. So in that case, if you can interpret it in that way, you purify your mind from all the illusions. Not just from unskilful mental states but from delusion itself, Ignorance itself. In other words you become at least a Stream-Entrant. Etan Buddhana sasanan. This is the teaching of the Buddhas. And you get Buddhas in the plural. Now this is often considered a sort of concise summary of the whole of the Dharma. The non-performance of all evil, the acceptance of all that is good or skilful, the purification of one's mind from all traces of delusion... this is the sasana of the Buddhas. The word sasana is interesting. It is translated as teaching. It is not just teaching, it is in a way quite untranslatable. I have gone into this somewhere before. The system, in a way, it is almost the government. Sasana in Pali and Sanskrit is also the word for the government. It is in a way "the order of the Buddhas" but it is not an order emanating as it were from a power base. You see what I mean? Sometimes it is translated as "Message", but it is more powerful than that, it is something sort of irresistible if you are really open you cannot not accept it. That is the sort of connotation that is conveyed. Or rather let me put it this way, that the Buddha is, to speak in terms of the Buddha, is sometimes referred to as the Dharma Raja, the King of the Dharma, so you can imagine an ordinary king issuing orders. The Buddha in the same way issues his orders and those orders are the Dharma. But of course he is a king in a quite different way from the way in which an ordinary king is a king. His kingship is not based upon power, but is based on to use the terms I have used sometime ago, Love. So it is in a way a bit contradictory as an expression, but the Buddha's orders are, as it were, love orders. If you see what I mean. If you know someone very well, you can tell them what to do. But you are not using power, you are not operating with power. So in the case of the Buddha it is like that. [37] Also, if you are a king you don't just issue orders at random, you've got a whole system of government. So the Buddha has a

sort of system of government which is not power based but love based. And this is what is meant by the Sasana. It is the Buddha's Dharma as organized so to speak; as actually implemented, as promulgated.

Murray: That's like it is a training discipline you take upon yourself. So in a sense you do take systems of government and...

S: ah! Maybe the best word in English is ordinance. The Buddha's ordinance. Are you familiar with this word, ordinance? Probably the dictionary makers, maybe not the others... Ordinance, the Buddha's ordinance. It is not a command in the ordinary worldly sense but it has a sort of force of command in a way.

v: A very strong suggestion...?

S: You could put it like that.

Mike: It seems to have the implications of the activity of Dharma. It seems to stress that, just like Saddhamma seems to stress other aspects.

S: Yes Right. Saddharma stresses the true and the real Dharma. The Sasana is the Dharma as sort of ... organized into a "social", inverted commas, system that people can actually follow. The Dharma as embodied in a concrete way of life, individual and collective. That is the Sasana.

Murray: So it seems that the Sangha is the Sasana.

S: No. The Sangha is an aspect ... because it does include the Teaching. It is not just those who follow the Teaching, it is the Teaching too and the way that the Teaching is organized and presented. All this is the Sasana.

Murray: so in a sense the Sasana has its own power too, the power of the Dharma ... [Unclear]

S: Right, Yes. It is a very common expression. For instance in Ceylon or Burma they won't say Buddhism, they'll say the Buddha's Sasana. It corresponds say more to the organized system of Buddhism in a positive sense of course.

Mike: Is there any relation, well between this fact that there is such a word as Sasana and Buddhism. In a sense is very organized. That presentation of the Doctrine, in contrast to Hinduism which at least to me looks like a mess, an incredible jumble. I mean it must have struck sort of contemporaries of people like Moggallana how clear the Teaching was in contrast to everybody else's.

S: Yes I think for instance the Buddhists in Ceylon, would not say that [38] say, the Dutch and the Portuguese, or the Portuguese and the Dutch rather, destroyed the Dharma. But they might say that they destroyed the Buddha's Sasana. Because it includes even the external organized aspect. It includes even the Viharas and the arrangements for supporting them, as well as the actual Teaching. The Dharma as a Teaching cannot be destroyed but the Buddha's Sasana can be destroyed... at least in its material manifestations. So you could even say that the Sasana is the Dharma as organized, as available, as embodied in a specific, well to use

these terms: socio-religious framework. But it is also the Message. The Message also translates it. Order translates Sasana literally. Governance translates it. The Governance of the Dharma, not Government but Governance of the Dharma. The Dharma as the governing principle of life, maybe that is closest to it. Sasana is the Dharma in its aspect as the governing principle of life, governing of course not by power but by love or you may say its own inherent Truth. It is a government, but it is a government to which you have to submit yourself voluntarily. It is a government which cannot I suppose by its nature be imposed upon you. It is a government which you have to accept for yourself.

Do got all practical purposes the non-doing of all evil is said to be comprised in the observance of the Precepts, because they are phrased negatively aren't they in Pali. You undertake not to do this and not to do that. And meditation consists in the acceptance or the bringing into existence of positive skilful mental states. And the purification of the mind consists in the purifying of it from Ignorance. Because the Buddha says somewhere or other, that I think it is in the Dhammapada, that the greatest of all stains is the stain of Ignorance. Spiritual ignorance. Any further points arising out of that verse, or any of the verses this morning?

Murray: Even in the Hinayana as far as I understand, people didn't regard the Buddha as just being singular. I mean even in the Pali Canon there is a list of Buddhas who the Buddha...

S: Ah yes! But that is .. it posited a whole succession of Buddhas in the past.. Then of course the Pali texts themselves, in their older portions, reveal the term Buddha used in the plural. Not just for the Buddha as we say now, and the Buddhas of the remote past, but for the Buddha and his immediate disciples, which is not of course emphasized by the Hinayana nowadays.

Murray: Buddhism essentially the whole principles or principle of the Buddha, that can exist now and that disciples can be Buddhas, they exist now and they existed in the past and will in the future and so on and so [39] forth and like the reason for their existence is to bring other people to their level of cognisance. It is just incredibly sophisticated, well it doesn't appear to me that there is any other religion that is even comparable.

S: Well, Lama Govinda has pointed out that this teaching that there were numberless Buddhas in the past and that there are numberless Buddhas scattered throughout space and other Worlds even now, is not intended dogmatically to assert the existence of such and such Buddhas at such and such times, at such and such places by name etcetera. But it is intended to assert the possibility of the attainment of Enlightenment wherever there is conscious life. Yes? So that is a very broad conception indeed. That wherever you have humanity you can have Enlightenment anywhere. It is not just here and now and not just 500 BC. It is anywhere in the world, anywhere in the universe, at any time that you have got human beings, you can have enlightenment.

Murray: Do you think that human beings, just to put simply, do you think that human beings, say on the other side of the universe, would have to have similar bodies for example?

S: Well it depends on one's definition of human.

Murray: Well there would just have to put it as elemental humanity.

S: Well again, what does one mean by elemental humanity? At least there will have to be a kind of consciousness. To what extent the kind of consciousness what we regard as human is tied up with, or tied to, the body that we regard as human, I think we don't know at present.

v: Do you think that the one thing that would be really the same would be the human state. And to the extent that we'd achieved a human state would be the extent we'd be able to communicate with other humans irrespective to their physical form.

S: I mean, you can have the experience of there being another human being present and the experience of communicating with them, even in the absence of their physical body. So I mean that has implications in this connection too. You would experience a human being and even though there was perhaps I'm only sort of suggesting this, I'm not sure, a different kind of physical configuration present. You could have the experience of a human being but the body might be a cube or even might have five or six little arms and legs.

Mike: In a sense, the more positive, more creative science fiction writers essentially do that. They essentially distinguish between possible alien types who an essential element in common with humanity and those which are totally alien but which nevertheless have intelligence.

[40]

S: Well you can have people or beings with human form but as it were almost demoniacal intelligence or an Enlightened mind.

v: Within the same physical form.

S: Within the same kind of physical form, yes. But, none the less, we know that the kind of physical body that we have is quite closely linked with the kind of circumstances under which Man evolved ... and we know that our mental states and our desires are closely linked with those conditions. I, mean, according to the Pali scriptures, and according to Buddhist scriptures generally, human beings, that is in human bodies, can communicate with Devas, which have different bodies and even different minds. I mean there is, according to the Buddhist scriptures there are kinds of devas which have the same "body", inverted commas, but who have one body but many minds and others who have many bodies and only one mind. But it is possible to communicate with those devas according to the Scriptures. So maybe the possibilities of inter-communication between beings of very different constitution are there. But there must be some common element which we can only call in our present state of knowledge and experience the human element. If they are human beings in the recognizable sense we could communicate with them, provided there was a medium of communication or provided a medium of communication could be formed and regardless almost of what sort of bodies they have. Though I did have a sort of mental reservation here about making too big a difference between body and mind.. as though you could have any kind of mind associated with any kind of body. I'm not so sure about that. I did have a friend who claimed to be able to see Devas, I am going to write about it in my memoirs shortly and I asked him what they were like . And he said they were very very small, that is several inches in length or height, but they were brilliant, all different colours and they flew through the air, and they had human form, they had human shape.

v: It is very different from the Greek concept of being sort of superhuman size.

S: Yes, well in Buddhist works there are other traditions. Other people say that, to the effect that, devas are if anything larger in size than human beings. But what does larger mean when they are not material 9

v: That is it isn't it? It is like they are formless.

S: Some devas are formless, not all, but they don't necessarily have gross material forms.

v: But you have got in a way to interpret them somehow. You may have an experience and you interpret that through your conceptual skill.

[41]

S: Yes. I mean you may have the experience of something or someone being bigger than you. I mean 'bigger' strictly speaking means of a larger material form But they may not have material form. You are using the word bigger quite metaphorically. So that Devas in principle are bigger than us it doesn't necessarily follow that they are bigger material forms. Anyway shall we leave it there for the day.?

End of Tape

S: All right lets got on to the next verse of the text.

v:184 "The most excellent of ascetic practices is the practice of forbearance 'Nibbana is supreme' say the Buddhas. He is not a recluse who harms another; nor is he an ascetic who molests others." Some of you know that last week I went to Bristol for a television interview and I knew that in the course of the interview I was going to be asked various questions about Buddhism and I was expecting to be asked something about Buddhism as asceticism because one usually gets such questions, that is to say, "Why is Buddhism so ascetic?" or "Why does Buddhism insist so much on asceticism?" As it happened I didn't get that particular question. I got one or two new questions for a change. But none the less, this is a question that does trouble and concern quite an number of people about Buddhism and asceticism. So it is something that it is quite important to try to clear up.

Well I think we'd better start by considering the word in the text which the translator Buddhadatta Thera, translates as ascetic practices. The word is tapo. Now has anybody got any idea what tapo, or tapas really means? Tapas is Sanskrit or tapasaya. Has anybody got any idea what this word literally means, what its root is? I thought I'd mentioned it on various occasions in various lectures, study groups.

v: Something to do with heat.

S: Something to do with heat, yes. The idea seems to have been, first of all in ancient history, that by the practice of meditation, as well as by the practice of asceticism in the sense of self-torture even, because we are dealing with or referring to the pre-Buddhistic period, you could generate a sort of psychic heat. A heat that could under certain circumstances even be physically perceptible. So in pre-Buddhist times they came to think of the spiritual life itself, so far as they understood it then, as a process of generating a sort of psychic heat, even a



spiritual heat, metaphorically speaking, in which all one's impurities [42] would be burned up. Do you get the idea? So asceticism for the ancient Indians was sort of the generation of this psychic heat in one way or another.

So the word went over into Buddhism Sometimes it is used in Pali fairly literally or not quite literally but metaphorically in a rather sort of simple and obvious way. There is a verb *tapati* to burn or to glow or to scorch and here in the Dhammapada there are some verses which speak of one's own conscience as we would say, scorching one or burning one as a result of one's consciousness that one has committed some unskilful action. But broadly speaking it has the meaning of engaging in some kind of spiritual practice of a more intensive nature, such as the ancient Indians believed resulted in the generation of what I've called psychic heat. The same sort of way of looking at things you get later on in the Vajrayana where there is the conception of the fiery energy, the Candali which blazes up in the lower psychic centre, ascends and melts all the knots, or unties all the knots and finally ascends into the thousand petalled lotus at the top. So all this is sort of associative symbolism. So the word here is *tapa*, *tapas*. So it is not asceticism in the sense that the English word usually has. So when we talk about asceticism rather, in English what do we usually mean? What is our connotation that is conveyed?

v: Self-flagellation

S: Self-flagellation, yes, but what does that mean? It is a Greek word originally, what did it mean in Greek? Asceticism?

v: Training

S: Training. Yes it means simply training. So the word has been greatly perverted since that time. So if we use the word asceticism in the original Greek sense of training of getting into training, whether literally or metaphorically, then it is a perfectly suitable word. But if we use it with its as it were Christian overtones or undertones of self-flagellation, then it is a most unsuitable word. But the Indian word, the Pali word translated here says nothing about training even. The word is "burning up" The burning up of all mental impurities through intensive spiritual effort, especially meditation. This is what *tapas* means.

Now the Buddha himself took over quite a number of terms from the previously existing Indian spiritual tradition. This was inevitable. He had to use the language that was current at the time. So sometimes the Buddha uses the old words in a new way. sometimes he uses them in the old way. Sometimes he sort of hovers in between. Here he is [43] sort of hovering in between, in this particular verse he says "the most excellent of ascetic practices", "the most excellent form of *tapa* ""is the practice of forbearance". It is as though he is talking to people who believe very much in *tapasya* in the sense or at least to some extent in the sense of self-torture, of inflicting penances upon oneself in order to generate this psychic heat and maybe gain psychic power, they believed in that sort of thing. So they believed almost in torturing themselves. So the Buddha was saying, "well, if you actually want to torture yourself if you want to give yourself something really difficult to do so as to generate this sort of inner psychic heat, just practice forbearance. Practice *Ksanti* and *Titikkha*, that is to say Patience and Forbearance. That is the best *tapasya*, that is the best self-mortification. But if we wanted to translate this sort of verse giving more emphasis to what the Buddha was actually saying to maybe the people of his time perhaps we should say that we should

translate as "the most excellent form of, or the best form of self-mortification is simply being patient and forbearing" In other words the Buddha was saying you don't have to devise any sort of special modes of self torture of tapasya, tapasya in the form of self-torture. For instance, in those days they had a tapasya called [panc'agni?] tapasya, the tapasya of the Five Fires. They would light fires-they would light four bonfires, North, South, East and West and they would sit in the middle and then there would be the blazing sun overhead as the fifth and then they would just sit there maybe meditating, maybe not. This was called the pancagnita tapasya, the tapasya of the Five Fires and they believed that that would lead to purification for their sins and so on. Others used to stand on one leg for long, long periods of time, or hold their arms up in the air, or let the fingernails grow, or just sit immobile in meditation in the snows for long periods of time. These were all tapasyas. They believed that by inflicting pain and suffering upon oneself one as it were strengthened oneself, one generated spiritual energy, spiritual heat, spiritual fire, even developed psychic powers, even would be able to bring the Gods under one's control and give them orders. So the Buddha is as it were, saying, "Well if you really want to suffer, if you think suffering is meritorious, there is no need to develop or even invent all these fanciful modes of suffering. If you just lead your ordinary daily life, well this will give you plenty of opportunities of undergoing mortification. If you are just patient and forbearing in the ordinary relationships of life when you come into contact with so many sorts of difficult people this will be tapasya enough. So there is a certain irony, a certain humour here. If you read it straight you know seriously as though somebody is saying "The most excellent of ascetic practices is the practice of forbearance", well this is a platitude as it were, it doesn't really have much meaning. Whereas it is as though the Buddha was saying with a little smile, "Look, if you want to [44] to go in for that sort of thing, if you want to go in for self-torture, well just be patient and forbearing when you meet various people who can be so difficult and give you such a lot of trouble. That is all you have to do. That is the best kind of tapasya, if that is what you are interested in." You see it is quite different sort of approach, a quite different sort of understanding, isn't it? I mean this is one of the things that we catch if we go through the Pali texts and we look at the Pali itself, not the rather straight English translation sometimes. The Buddha definitely had a sense of humour and it more often than not took the form of irony. This is one of the very marked resemblances between the Buddha and Socrates. Socratic irony is famous, but I think Gautamanic irony, if we may call it that, ought to be no less famous. And it very often isn't brought out in the translation because maybe the translator missed it. He's not expecting the Buddha to be ironical any more than those dear old souls who used to come to my lectures at our Hampstead Vihara in the very early days expected bhikshus to crack jokes! You see? It is just like that. You know that sort of thing isn't supposed to be done but here we find the Buddha, yes, being a bit humorous, a bit ironical.

v: What do you think irony is?

S: lets go into that a little bit. Here is an example of the Buddha's irony. Well how is that irony is not inappropriate to the Buddha, to the Enlightened one? I mean what is the function of irony? what is irony?

v: It shows up the emptiness of things.

S: Yes in what sort of way? How does it do that?

v: It seems to turn the state back on itself somehow.

v: I think that it often cuts through sort of conceptual language. If you have got a problem that you are just thinking about it cuts through, it is so ridiculous that it gets through to your guts.

S: Yes. Irony we could say at least from one point of view is an expression of proportion. That's where Socrates says, "Well, a wise man like you would certainly know the answer to this". (Laughter) It is really cutting him down to size. He is really sort of showing him he isn't really a wise man at all, without actually saying so. So the Buddha without actually saying, well the Buddha doesn't actually attack so much to say "It's a really stupid foolish dangerous sort of thing to do". He just says "Well if you want to go in for that sort of thing, well why not just be patient and forbearing in the ordinary relationships of life". It is sort of reducing the importance of that very one-sidedly extreme so called religious practice. So it is exposing it for what it really is. It is showing up it's emptiness. So do you think that sort of, that irony is [45] always appropriate?

v: ..being able to make a point even despite how good it is. It might not get through to people.

S: Yes irony is lost or wasted on some people. Their minds are not subtle enough to appreciate it or they'll miss your point or they'll answer you quite literally.

v: One gets the impression it is very much a skilful means. Socrates was notorious as a brilliant teacher. Even in some of the Dialogues it is obvious his victims sometimes just don't understand that he is being ironical. But it can also degenerate into being sarcastic which is nothing other than evil.

S: Yes that is true. Yes, irony can degenerate into a sort of diffuse cynicism. You certainly don't find that with the Buddha, but there are these touches of irony when indeed the Buddha apparently considers the occasion suitable or considers the irony suitable or appropriate to the particular occasion. I mean one could even go so far as to say that very often describing the Buddha image, describing the smile on the face of the Buddha, one speaks of a compassionate smile. But one could also say that it is a slightly ironical smile because you might say, well you know, if an Enlightened mind just looks at the way people live and the things that they do, well he cannot help sort of seeing it all as rather ironical. (laughter) And of course also with compassion, because not only do people do all these absurd things, they get themselves into all sorts of difficult and painful situations. So I think probably the compassion doesn't exclude that touch of irony.

v: I remember once thinking that a great Teacher has to be taken dead seriously.

v: I think that must be a Christian heritage really. One couldn't imagine say any Christian quoting Christ except in utmost deadly earnest reverence.

S: Yes, But how can a Buddha be serious? I mean when dealing with worldly affairs? I mean the last thing that the Buddha, the Enlightened One should take the things that you take seriously as seriously as you take them yourself. Well you've lost your job... Oh that is a very serious sort of thing (laughter) Can you really think that the Buddha takes that equally seriously? or you have lost your girl friend, she has left you. can you imagine the Buddha sort of saying "Oh that is really terrible! (laughter) as though he took it as seriously as you take it for the time being. Or "I've lost all my money" Can you really imagine the Buddha taking your sense of loss in a sense seriously as seriously [46] you take them yourself. Well you've

lost your job, oh that is a very serious sort of thing! (laughter) So in a way that is the last thing one would expect a Buddha to be serious about, the things that we are serious about.

I mean Nietzsche has something to say about this. He speak of "the spirit of gravity" and "the spirit of levity". The spirit of gravity is almost this sort of seriousness. A spirit of levity is the opposite, not levity in a frivolous sense but lightness in the sense that well you just don't take seriously or attach great importance to the things that most people take seriously or attach importance to, like possessions, reputations, relationships et cetera. So according to Nietzsche, a spirit of levity is appropriate to the philosopher, the true philosopher, not a spirit of gravity. And of course there is a sort of pun I don't know how it works out in German but certainly in English, that gravity, the force of gravity or gravitation it is a sort of heaviness both material and psychological even spiritual. So according to Nietzsche that sort of heaviness is not appropriate to the philosopher. A philosopher needs a sort of lightness of touch. So you could say with the spiritual person, he should be distinguished by a certain lightness of touch. He shouldn't be dead serious and heavy about the spiritual life. And this is why a good dose of Zen is sometimes quite appropriate because a lot of the Zen Masters have this very definite sense of spiritual levity, lightness, even playfulness as did some of the Tantric Masters. You don't get much of that in the Theravada. I mean, the Buddha himself personally seems to have gone in for sort of mild irony which his followers in the Theravada usually miss, translators usually miss, the result being that the Theravada, without the Buddha's irony becomes a bit heavy at times. It needs to be lightened by that irony.

v: But gravity isn't seriousness. Seriousness seems to be something else.

S: Well seriousness is an ambiguous word, meaning so to speak, as we discussed yesterday, words have got all sorts of connotations. You can use the word seriousness in the sense of being very heavy about something or you can use the word seriousness in the sense of being very genuine and sincere about something, being really concerned with it. So when Nietzsche speaks of the spirit of gravity he is speaking of seriousness in the negative sort of sense. Not a true seriousness which is sometimes, which is what Matthew Arnold called "high seriousness". I mean that can be a bit heavy sometimes. (laughter)

v: Can the quality of seriousness be potentially both negative and positive?

[47]

S: Yes. You can be serious and playful. You can be serious about something and make jokes about it at the same time. Some people think that if you are serious about something you cannot jokes about it, that is a great mistake. You can joke about something that you are really very serious about. That is to say you can allow your sense of humour to play around it. It doesn't mean that you are taking it lightly, but you are able to put it across sometimes by way of a joke. Just as the Buddha is putting across a certain teaching by means of a bit of irony. But of course again there is laughter and laughter. There is the laughter of the cynic and it is not that which is meant here.

v: It is true that the Buddha doesn't take worldly sort of things very seriously. On the other hand ordinary folk don't take things that the Buddha takes seriously, seriously themselves ..the ultimate release from suffering. They are just playing around with it.

S: Yes. Well they're going to take that as a real joke. "If you start talking about that well you

can't be serious." Or else they say "Give up everything? Leave home? You must be joking !" But you know this is true. There is another Dhammapada verse where the Buddha says "there are people who see that which is devoid of Essence as having Essence and that which has Essence as devoid of Essence". So in the same way people see as serious those things which are not serious and they see as not serious those things which are serious. Whether you are affluent or not, that is a serious matter for some people. But whether you are developing as a human being, that is not a serious matter at all.

v: I think that where energy is invested that is serious.

S: Yes. People take seriously those things in which they invest energy, or invest energy in those things which they take seriously. This is a way of telling what are the things that people really take seriously. It is the things they put a lot of energy into.

v: I think that Devamitra's point about "The Stalker" last night in a sense is relevant too. That there is sometimes people who think that something means a lot to them but they don't put their energies into that. And that is not even talking about the spiritual life where you come up against obvious barriers. People who say, think they're taking their job seriously and put their energy into their drinking life or something similar

S: Yes. All right lets go back to the verse. So the Buddha says "Ksantiparanam tapo-titikkha - the most excellent, as Buddhadatta translates it, the most excellent of ascetic practises is the practice of forbearance. Or as we might put it "the best form of self-mortification is just [48] being patient and forbearing under all circumstances". But this Ksanti and Titikkha, Buddhadatta only translates forbearance but it is Ksanti at the beginning and Titikkha forbearance at the end of the line. So it is patience and forbearance. You have come across patience of course before? Do you remember where that is?

v: One of the perfections.

S: It is one of the Perfections. Dana, Sila, Ksanti, Virya, Samadhi, Prajna. These are the Paramitas.

v: Is ksanti any relation to Santi?

S: No. Santi is peace but ksanti is patience. There is no etymological connection .They are very different words, quite a bit in the context of the Perfections. Do you remember what were the main points or maybe the main point that we should bear in mind at least on the level of ordinary understanding about Ksanti? Well perhaps one could find a way into it by trying to distinguish between what one might call positive patience a and negative patience.

v: Positive patience is receptivity, a sort of feminine quality of openness to what is happening and at the same time not getting upset or agitated about something we cannot do anything about. Say you have an injury, you don't get angry about having the injury. And that leads into a sort of forbearance quality, so with patience if you are sick.. and you are doing what you can do about it you don't get annoyed because it is not going away faster. And the negative is just a sort of "Allah wills it" attitude.

S: Yes, well it is a sort of knuckling under, just bowing the head and rather resentfully giving

in.

v: Is that something you have to do ... do you like have to force yourself through the negative in order to come out at the positive? For example if you are prone to losing your temper with people or being irritated by them say and if you want to develop the Perfection of Patience do you at first have to consciously bottle down your...

S: I think you do, but you have to know what you are doing and why you are doing it and as it were tell yourself that, "due to my bad habits in the past, I tended to let fly and get angry with people. Well I'm not going to do that in future, I am going to develop a positive emotional attitude towards them. Even if they do do something which is annoying or stupid that makes me angry" And you can check that anger in various ways, as described by Shantideva : developing the Metta Bhavana, considering the ill-consequences of giving way to anger and so on. But for the [49] time being you'll probably just have to hold it in check. But you are not repressing it because you are fully conscious of what is happening. You are aware of the anger, in a sense you are experiencing it. But for certain positive, skilful reasons you are holding it in check in the sense that you are not allowing it outward expression and are trying to transform it into something positive, in the end into metta. So you could say that Patience is metta experienced under conditions which usually would give rise to the opposite. If you can continue to experience metta under circumstances in which one might reasonably from an ordinary human point of view be expected to get angry, that is Patience. The word forbearance titikkha brings that out more because forbearance is sort of non-retaliation. Because you don't feel any anger or any hatred, you continue to feel metta even in the face of provocation, you don't retaliate and your non-retaliation is forbearance. You forbear taking revenge, you forbear reacting. So it is as though Ksanti refers more to the inner attitude. Titikkha refers more to the external action, though of course they do overlap. Do you see what I mean?

v: It really seems that in a way though it is impossible to practise Patience without energy because you really need, even though virya in theory is sort of the next step, it is as if you need this positive energy, otherwise you are not going to be able to control that situation, if you feel like punching someone on the nose.

S: Unless you have energy you are not going to be able to experience Metta because Metta is a form of energy. It is not a mere passive feeble lifeless sort of thing at all. I think one should say that you mustn't leave the development of metta until it is too late. Do you see what I mean? You mean, if someone does something really foolish or stupid or antagonistic, well you mustn't wait and develop your metta then. Well it is quite difficult actually to develop it under those conditions. You have got to have it there ready all the time and it is got to be sufficiently strong sufficiently powerful, sufficiently stable to resist the shock of whatever it is that is done to you and to remain Metta, and then that is Ksanti is patience. It is as though Patience isn't really a separate quality, it is Metta operating under certain circumstances in circumstances of extreme provocation. I mean what other things does Patience imply?

It implies a certain amount of understanding so that you can understand why the other person is behaving in the stupid way that he is behaving and that helps you not to react. So that understanding is a contributory factor as well as your sort of normal, your standard mood of metta. So if you want to go in for self-mortification, just be patient and [50] forbearing in the face of all the provocations that you may receive because of living your ordinary day to day

life. You may have a lot to put up with. Ksanti. People can be very annoying, very irritating, but one has got to maintain one's metta under all circumstances, under all such circumstances and that needs patience and forbearance. Of course it doesn't mean again as in the case of a near enemy, it is not a case of saying "Ah! That's stupid. Forget about it" That is impatience.

v: Reminds me of Schopenhauer's thing about Patience whereby he says you should train yourself to be patient by regarding people as you would an inanimate object. So you are walking along the road and a stone rolls down the hill, well you just see it and you walk round it. Treat it just as the course of Nature, don't take it personally. But I think it is a bit lacking in metta.

S: Well sometimes people do behave like forces of Nature. It is not as though they are aware individuals deliberately behaving in the way that they are behaving. They are sort of carried along by their instincts or their feelings. They don't know what they are doing, they just happen to blunder into you. So there is no point in getting angry with them, it is like the wind blowing or a tree sort of crashing down across your path. It is just like that. It is just a sort of unmindfulness on their part, they are not truly human beings when they behave in that way. What is the point of getting angry with them?

v: I think in my experience when I get angry with people like that, there is an element of projection in me, I am projecting a malevolence on to them which they probably don't have.

S: Yes, I think so. Oh yes, sometimes one says "They're doing this to annoy me", but they may not be thinking of you at all. They're thinking about their concerns and their convenience. They're not thinking about annoying you, they are not thinking about you at all, they don't even know that you exist ! But it is one's sort of self-centredness that makes one say, "well they are just doing it to annoy me". Well I mean, some people feel like this about impersonal things like Nature. For example, if it is raining, "It's raining just to annoy me (laughter) Or if you want to go out "Of course it would happen like that, It always does. Its deliberate!" With children if they strike their own foot against a stone, they will say "Oh bad stone!" and hit it. (laughter)

All right next line: Nibbanan paraman vadanti Buddha. Nibbana is supreme say the Buddhas. Well that is just a completely literal translation . You notice Buddhas in the plural here again. Nirvana as we usually say in the Sanskrit form, [51] "is supreme, say the Buddhas, the Awakened Ones, the Wise Ones" Why is that statement made? Why is it said that Nirvana is supreme? One would have thought that was pretty obvious. Why do people need reminding about it? What is the purpose of the Buddha's statement? Nirvana is supreme, is there any doubt about it?

v: Well would they be referring to specifically Nirvana of the Buddha's, say on the background of the ascetics who had all sorts of weird practices, they've got all different sorts of ideas of what Nirvana is and he is referring to them by the ..

S: Yes. Also Nirvana is the aim, the goal in manner of speaking, one mustn't forget the goal. One mustn't lose sight of the end on account of the means. Maybe the people who were engaged in tapaya had forgotten that it had that sort of, if they were desirable at all, they were desirable only as a means to an end. They're taken perhaps, the means for the end. So perhaps the Buddha is reminding them of that. Maybe that second line is to be seen against

background of the first. Again he is restoring a sense of proportion. He is saying "Tapasya is all very well, ksanti and titikkha are all very well, but they are only means to an end. It is nirvana that is supreme." But perhaps it goes even further than that. Perhaps the Buddha is sort of reminding us in a phrase that one often hears around the Friends, to get our priorities right. Do you see what I mean? Nirvana is supreme but it isn't the co-op that is supreme (laughter) It isn't, it is not even meditation that is supreme. It is not going on retreat that is supreme. It is not communication that is supreme. It is not even what shall I say? Arhantship that is supreme from the Mahayana point of view. It is Nirvana that is supreme. So what is the practical corollary of that statement? It is putting first things first. So we very often sacrifice what is of more importance to what is of less importance. So this is an example on the grand scale as it were. This is the basic principle, Nirvana is supreme and everything else has to be organized in accordance with that fact.

So what the Buddha is really sort of reminding us to make up our minds what is of more importance and what is of less importance. And put more time and more energy into what is of more importance. Of course it is not possible perhaps to put energy directly on to Nirvana because Nirvana perhaps is the culminating point so to speak of a whole sequence of experiences. So you cannot sort of jump any of them, you have to go through them all, you have to follow the Path, stage by stage, step by step. But one is not to linger over any of the earlier [52] even less is one to wander in the opposite direction altogether. So it isn't easy to establish one's order of priorities. I mean, the hill which is immediately before one looms very large and one can forget the mountain that lies behind. One can even sort of wander around that hill a bit completely forgetting the mountains. Again it is a question of what does one really take seriously. One should take most seriously that which is of the greatest importance. Well that is easy enough to say, but to put it into operation is very difficult.

v: The trouble is actually for most people, Nirvana is so far ahead that for instance some of the things that you indeed might have to do what might be the priority of the moment, might be quite far removed, even though you are doing it for the sake of Nirvana, but might quite far removed from Nirvana, it is almost so abstract.

S: Well that is why I say one has to see Nirvana as the culminating point of a whole series, a whole sequence of experiences. It is not that you jump straight in there or to attack Nirvana directly. You have to go along a proper path. You have to pass through various stages, you have to take various steps. But there needs to be a clear idea in your mind. For instance, you may decide that you need to work on say communication, that communication is your weak point. That is holding you up. But you don't think that communication is the most important thing in life, it is just the most important thing for you for the time being. But you recognize that taking a longer view, that communication may not be all that important, but for the time being it is important for you. So even though you are giving more time or attention to something for the time being, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have altered your order of priorities.

v: There is a constant danger of losing...

End of Side One

...quite possibly as a useful means at the moment. There was one chap there who had nothing to do with the Friends. He was a body builder. And it had become an end in itself. One does



not keep it so that one can lead a healthy life, it is just being fit, and of course the same sort of danger is found in things like culture or...

S: quite yes, You mentioned culture. In a way it was quite an eye-opener to me, I read a book which was sent to me to review, although I haven't got around to it yet. It was "Zen Dawns in the West" by Philip Kapleau and there was quite an interesting little sort of autobiographical sketch by Kapleau. He has his own Zen meditation centre in New York State

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v: Rochester.

S: Rochester, and he has been in contact with us for many many years through correspondence and I think some of our Friends have visited his Centre. Anyway his autobiographical sketch was very interesting. At one stage of his life when he was a youngish man during the war, just after the war, he worked as a shorthand reporter at the Nuremberg trials, the War Crimes trials and of course he heard all the evidence when he was taking it down and it really struck him, he says, that part of the evidence was that some of the Nazi guards in the concentration camps would be murdering and torturing prisoners during the day and in the evening they would sit around listening to Bach. So this struck Kapleau at the time ... that culture is not enough. Because culture, the fact that they enjoyed Bach had not been able to keep these people from these terrible crimes and this is one of the factors that caused him to look around for something more than culture and eventually he came in contact with Buddhism and especially Zen.

And so one can really see that. You can make culture an end in itself and it does nothing for you as an individual really. It is as though even culture doesn't function properly, doesn't really help you except within a broader frame-work of higher spiritual values. I mean what was the good of their Bach to those concentration camp guards? It is a terrible thought when you think of it, that people can, yes probably they were actually enjoying the Bach, but it had no influence upon their lives or their character, it didn't prevent them doing all those horrible things

v: It is very hard for me that they could be indulging in all those things, killing people, then listen to the Bach, I mean they wouldn't have enjoyed it would they?

S: Yes, one would have thought so, but apparently it wasn't the case.

v: They were probably completely schizophrenic.

S: Ah, one could look at it that way. If one looks at, if one thinks of say the Italian Renaissance and those princes who were patrons of the Arts and commissioning those beautiful paintings and listening to music and having their enemies bumped off at the same time. So one is made very aware of the limitations of culture. One cannot make culture, even in it's highest and most refined form an end in itself.

So this is why the Buddha said, "Nirvana is supreme". Culture is not supreme. Nirvana is supreme, the transcendental is supreme.

I mean, some people behave or speak as though the Arts were supreme. Beauty was supreme,

as though, yes music was supreme, or as though cricket was supreme, or football was supreme, but no, it is Nirvana that is supreme.[54] I mean it is all right to play a good game of football, but it is terrible surely to live for football, to live for it as some people do, they live for the game, live for football, that is the boundary of their horizon. Or they live for boxing or they live for the sake of sex. It is as though, all these things have their place perhaps, but none of them should actually bound our horizon, we shouldn't live for them, we shouldn't make them supreme. This is a form of idolatry, the making supreme what is in fact not supreme, of treating as supreme what is not supreme, whatever it's value may be, not that it has not value, but it has limited value. It doesn't have the highest value.

v: I think that all these things become their means. The word itself gives away that they are double edged swords because the means to what? Because they aren't say being used as means on the Path where they've got a clearly defined sort of role for instance, then it is as if they are purposeless. I mean you can pick up a very distinct feel of difference say three days ago on the Underground there was an absolute football fanatic about ten feet away from me and you could really feel the difference between him and someone even who went to a game, a professional game every week. And the complete sort of culture aesthetes too, there is like a sort of corruption about them.

S: Yes, They don't regard it as a means at all. It is for them the end. So they don't look around for anything beyond it at all.

v: It is like they lose the element of dynamism in it so. Jenny Soames did a really good talk on Mozart at the LBC about a month ago and one of the things that came through was sort of the dynamic element, that Mozart was never satisfied. It wasn't that he was dissatisfied in a negative sense but he was always striving to go higher and he kept in a sense getting more and more profound until he died. Whereas the sort of culture aesthete listens to him in a sort of static way.

S: Yes:

v: It seems to be a matter of continuously balancing an Arhant ideal or the Bodhisattva ideal or the path of Vision against the Path of Transformation. I find sometimes when I'm with the Friends, I suddenly realize that what I'm actually getting into, more than my own development is building institutions. And end up by sort of swinging back to re-establish my with vision say. And it seems to me that until one attains some sort of balance or basic wisdom...

S: Or doesn't see the two as opposed any longer The one is directly the expression of the other, the one contributes to the other. But you know, I feel this very strongly when I read say books say of literary [55] criticism. Recently I have read quite a few books on D.H. Lawrence and obviously, probably you know that D.H. Lawrence both in his novels and in his other writings, really struggled with certain basic human issues. Some times he comes to conclusions that we wouldn't exactly approve of . He struggled really intensively, really seriously in the best sense. And then you get people writing books about his struggle, well you can see they don't participate in that struggle, that struggle as a struggle means very little to them, they don't really feel it. They take D.H. Lawrence and his works as a sort of Art. They look at the ordeal with them from a narrowly cultural point of view. So in a way they're miles and miles away from Lawrence, they don't understand him at all, they just amuse themselves with him, write a PhD thesis on him and so on. This is why I said in an aphorism

in 'Peace is a Fire', I forget the actual words: but it might have been even, it wasn't that people read the poets for instance and they don't realize that the poets actually mean what they say. Even they say "Well, poetry's an exaggeration and hyperbole, you cannot take it seriously" But actually that is exactly how you should take it how you must take it if you are to understand it at all. The Poets mean what they say. You are to take it at its literal face value, initially at least. They were not indulging in sort of rhetorical fallacies. When Blake for instance said that he sees the world in a grain of sand he meant that he saw it, it was not a figure of speech, he meant that, quite literally, that he was able to look at a grain of sand and actually see the world in it, that was his actual experience. And he meant that as a sort of expression of his insight into the nature of Reality. It wasn't just a pretty little poem. But you get people quoting in a sentimental sort "Oh to see the world in a grain of sand" and what is the rest of it "Heaven in a wild flower" It becomes sort of sentimental, but for Blake it wasn't anything sentimental. It was his direct experience. It was just how he saw it, just how he felt, just how he experienced it. I mean similarly Coleridge, when he wrote, "All thoughts that, .. whatever stirs this mortal frame etc., etc., all are but ministers of Love and feed his sacred flame", well you know we may well disagree with Coleridge, but that is what he meant. He meant that to be taken quite seriously. He wasn't just sentimentalising. So you know we need, that is to say I'm almost sort of saying that poets aren't just poets in the ordinary superficial sense. They are very serious people saying what they really think about life, in the best possible way that they can which is in the form of poetry. So it really sort of degrades them to just approach them as culture. The great poets are far, far more than just culture. They are nearer to say, the great poets of English are nearer to Buddhism in the sense than culture in the sense that the aesthete understands the term. The aesthete will never understand Shakespeare or Milton or [56] Shelley or Coleridge or Byron or D.H. Lawrence never understand them because he doesn't take life seriously enough. He doesn't see that Nirvana is supreme. They however dimly in their own way had some sense of value. They saw in a manner of speaking that Nirvana was supreme, all of them, though they might not have put it in that way and they certainly weren't Buddhists. But they had some sense of higher values far transcending their own art. That is why sometimes they were impatient with their own art. It didn't mean as much to them as it meant to some of their so-called admirers. I mean, Lawrence didn't care whether he spoiled the artistic shape of a story provided he was able to say what he wanted to say. But the aesthete would say, "Oh what a pity, he intruded his message into this beautiful story and spoilt its form" (laughter) Well in a way it is a pity that he couldn't have had a perfect form and his message too or maybe that is a pity. but we cannot regret the breaking of the beautiful artistic form for the sake of Lawrence saying something which he really felt it necessary to say. It is much the same when sometimes, when you project qualities that you would like to experience on to another human being, you are just sort of viewing them aesthetically, you are not seeing them as they are. You are seeing them as it were in more cultural terms. You are not allowing them perhaps to be a real live human being. You want them to behave like a work of art... so that you can admire that particular work of art. You don't like it when the human reality breaks through the aesthetic fantasy.

So it comes back to what the Buddha says, "Nirvana is supreme" put first things first and this is especially so in the case of culture. You don't really appreciate culture unless you can see beyond culture. The greatest poets were not concerned just with poetry in the narrow sense. You see Milton certainly wasn't, Shelley certainly wasn't. Shelley's basic aims, it seems in a way, were political and he used his poetry for a political purpose, using the word political quite broadly. He wanted to ameliorate the condition of the human race, that was his real interest in life, not poetry in the narrow sense. I mean, we do say, that poets are the

unacknowledged legislators of Mankind, but you know what a conception of the poet, not just the aesthete, not just the maker of pretty verses or not what Blake called "the tame finisher of ... the tame high finisher of paltry blots"

v: "The mask of Apollo" where the narrator's a great classic actor at the end of the classic era of Greece and it comes in very strongly as he really sees himself in a sense as a High Priest of Apollo really ... he is a very powerful, devouring force ... that is his, it is like his craft, his whole honour and everything rests on that. May be you could follow that back to what Subhuti was saying about the Apeman and Pagan man. I mean do you feel most of us are really ready for culture? Do you think it is as useful a means towards our -?-

[57]

S: well there is culture and culture. I mean to say for instance take poetry. Poetry is an important part of culture. Are you ready for poetry?

Well as I said there is poetry and poetry. You may not be ready for Milton but perhaps you are ready for Shelley. You may not be ready for Shelley but perhaps you are ready for A.E. Houseman. Or perhaps you are not ready for A.E. Houseman, perhaps you are ready for Rupert Brooke, You may not be ready for Rupert Brooke ... perhaps you are ready for Pam Ayres! (laughter) Assuming that you class that as poetry!

v: And if one isn't ready for Pam Ayres, so to Barbara Cartland, but on the other hand what did Milarepa know about culture?

S: Ah! I think in the case of Milarepa it is very different. This is a quite interesting point. Milarepa lived in Tibet. In Tibet, in those days at least, culture was not anything separate from the spiritual tradition itself. The spiritual tradition, the Buddhist tradition, contained all the culture. You see in the modern West we have got a secular non-religious culture which has sprung up since the Renaissance, say. You did not have that in Tibet for instance no more than you had in say Medieval Christian Europe. So in Tibet, did you have literature that was secular literature? It was all religious literature, all Buddhist literature. Did you have for instance the novel? I mean the novel is a very interesting phenomenon from this point of view. It is completely secular isn't it? But did you have any completely secular literature in that sense in Tibet? No . Even history was the history of Buddhism. History started off with the life of the Buddha. Everything starts off with the life of the Buddha. You know some years ago a friend of mine, a Tibetan lama was invited to translate a Tibetan Medical work, he was invited by the Wellcome Institute, which was a very well-known medical institute of research by medical and they were really quite dismayed I heard because the first third of the work apparently consists of the life of the Buddha. (laughter) The history of Buddhism and there was quite a lot about Manjusri because by tradition Manjusri introduced, apparently medicine into Tibet. And then at long last you get to Tibetan medicine. So Milarepa in one sense had no culture, but in another sense he had nothing but culture. But he had it as fully integrated into Buddhism, into the Dharma.

v: So that ... it is possible to get Enlightenment completely bypassing culture?

S: Well I mean we in the modern West are in a quite peculiar historically unprecedented situation of having a secular culture. A culture which is divorced as it were, from formal spiritual values. I think the spiritual values are not actually in fact in many cases absent,

because the great [58] poets, the great novelists as developed individuals, had a certain amount of insight and expressed that in their work. For instance George Eliot, some of us have been reading George Eliot recently, she is quite a good example. She was a quite well read, even learned woman, certainly a very deeply thoughtful woman and she expressed her reflections on life, the conclusions to which she had come in the course of her novels and sometimes they are very profound indeed. They owe nothing to Christianity because she was an agnostic, she lost her faith in Christianity very early in life. But what the great poets and novelists very often lack or usually lack, is the sense of belonging to a tradition, no spiritual community and this sometimes one can see hampers their work itself, certainly hampers them in their lives. I mean, D.H. Lawrence for instance clearly felt the lack of a spiritual community, wanted what we would call a spiritual community couldn't get one together and suffered because of that. So modern Western culture is a very peculiar phenomenon because it had developed not only divorced from but in opposition too to some extent the established 'religious' inverted commas tradition namely that of Christianity. But there shouldn't be that breach ... because in fact culture shouldn't be something separate. It's become separate in the West because well Christianity was not one might say a true spiritual tradition or rather it had developed into something that was no longer a true spiritual tradition. So a lot of spiritual values as it were transmigrated into secular culture, so called secular culture. You might sometimes say that secular culture is you know at times really spiritual and the religious tradition, namely that of Christianity, is actually quite secular in a quite narrow sense. It becomes very worldly. But in the case of Buddhism we normally find the spiritual tradition and the cultural tradition fully integrated at one. The culture subserves the spiritual tradition. Not that it's just a sort of external instrument of it but that culture, is fully imbued with spiritual values and the spiritual values find their quite natural, spontaneous expression in cultural forms.

Anyway that is a sort of commentary on "Nirvana is bliss". All right we'd better pause there and finish the verse after our morning refreshment.

S: ...and say when one thinks that other people, even other Buddhist groups are wrong. I think we have to have the courage to do that, that is one of our strengths.

v: Do you get any feedback on that type of criticism?

S: Usually none at all. Oh yes a little bit For instance a little bit came about Subhuti's article in the newsletter. A Buddhist whom I knew in those old days an English Buddhist connected with the Thais rang Subhuti

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-?- ... name, who had made some criticism and wasn't very happy with it, but it was all sort of vague and I told Subhuti he should have said, "Well let the bhikkhu write or arrange to see me and we could have a chat." But apparently that sort of thing just isn't possible. The bhikkhu was, without revealing his name, operating through this particular lay Theravada Buddhist to express some disquiet and sort of ask some questions, but it wasn't very clear what those questions were and what was his criticism of Subhuti's criticism. But there was not sort of coming out into the open and saying, "Well look let's get together, let's talk it over." It was very diplomatic and political as it were. So I said I didn't like it at all and that Subhuti should say, "Well let the bhikkhu write to me come and see me and we can talk about it, we welcome that sort of thing" But apparently that is not the way they want to operate.

I mean this is what I personally have found all through my career as a Buddhist. I've often had criticism to make and I've made it quite openly and in print. No one has ever, ever on one occasion met my criticism openly by writing an article in reply or anything like that or by even writing to me a letter to say that they disagreed. At most they will murmur among themselves. or just say things to other people but never has anybody sort of crossed swords with me openly or publicly. I think in a way that is more than they care to do. Even with Subhuti too and the FWBO generally no one openly opposes or crosses our path, but there is just a little murmur in the corner here and there (laughter)

v: Maybe that is why we need [Vajrayana] (laughter)

S: I never -?- about that from here. All right. "Na hi pabbajito parupaghati", which Buddhaddatta translates as "He is not a recluse who harms another" What do you understand by a recluse? Just tell right off the top of your head.

v: Someone who has withdrawn from the worldly life.

v: someone who has left home and is leading the spiritual life seriously in the positive sense.

v: A man who lives apart from others.

S: Yes but does that exhaust the meaning of the Pali word pabbajito? What is pabbajito? (laughter)

v: Is he the monk, the person who has taken Refuge? I mean the recluse in the sense that he has gone for Refuge?

S: Well technically no. Technically the pabbajito, one who has gone forth, yes, the word means "one who has gone forth", who has gone forth from worldly life but has not yet necessarily, as it were, found the Buddha.

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In ancient India, in the Buddha's time there were a lot of people who were called parivajikka, that is a Sanskrit word. You might have heard me talking about parivajikkas. They were a sort of class of people who had left ordinary secular life, family life usually, but not always and who had dropped out of all society. They were called parivajikkas. They had cut loose from the existing society but they had not yet necessarily found the Buddha. They had gone forth, they had left home, but they had not yet been accepted yet into the spiritual community. So this is preserved still in the so-called Sramanera's ordination. The Sramanera's ordination, the novice monk's ordination is, is called "Pabbaja", which means he has going forth. So when you become a Sramanera, this is with the monastic context, you go forth, you leave home, and when you become a bhikkhu you are accepted into the monastic order. So going forth, strictly speaking historically speaking is not the same thing as "Going for Refuge" It is what you have to do as it were before you go for Refuge. You have to cut yourself off as it were you have to go forth if not literally at least mentally from all worldly ties and conditioning and then you go for Refuge. Because you cannot go for Refuge, really without having left home in the true sense. But you can have left home without yet having gone for Refuge. Is this clear?

v: You move into a community and then you decide you want ordination And you can go for

Refuge

S: Yes.

v: And you can go for Refuge without leaving home.

S: Well you can go for Refuge without having taking literally the expression going for Refuge in the true sense. You can take it without having left home literally, but you must at least have left home mentally and it is not easy to leave home mentally without also leaving home literally. You cannot be really sure that you have left home mentally unless you have several --??-- But in principle, yes. You can leave home, you can go forth mentally whilst you are still living at home in the literal sense. It depends what home is. I mean some homes are more "homey" than others. Sometimes you know you really have to leave literally, you cannot even leave mentally staying in that situation.

So very often "Pabbajito" or Parivagikka is used just for the spiritual person, to the extent that you are a spiritual person by virtue of the fact that you have given up all worldly ties. It is used loosely. A bhikkhu is a parivajikka but parivajikkas are not necessarily bhikkhus. There were a lot of parivajikkas around in the Buddha's time who were following teachers other than the Buddha, who were set up in communities [61] like the Buddha's community, that is to say like the Buddha's Sangha. So this statement is about a recluse, a pabbajito. So the Buddha says "He is not a recluse who harms another". Parupaghati who harms, who attacks who assaults another. So why is this?

v: Well to harm somebody necessitates that he is still worldly.

S: Yes this is what it means and why are you likely to harm another? I mean when you are harming or trying to harm another on what sort of mode are operating?

v: Power mode, you are caught up.

S: Exactly. Power mode, you are caught up in it, so to go forth means not just going forth from home in the sense of the parental roof, but going forth from all existing power structures and not operating within any of those structures at all. For instance traditionally in the Vinaya there is a, not exactly a rule, but sort of provision in the Vinaya, or at least the Vinaya is understood to mean that a bhikkhu, if he is called upon to bear witness in a court of law, cannot give any evidence that might result in somebody being hurt. You see the reasoning here? I mean he has gone forth. He cannot operate according to the power mode. He cannot even support that or co-operate with that. That is why a bhikkhu cannot be a soldier he cannot be an instrument of the State in any way, the state is a power structure. So, "to go forth" really means to go forth from all structures which are based upon the power mode and then how can you do anybody any harm? The fact that you do anybody any harm, that you resort to force means that you have not gone forth. Because "going forth" doesn't just mean leaving home in the quite literal sense. It means abandoning recourse to power, not living as it were, within a power structure. Living within eventually if you can find one a spiritual community.

v : Could you actually advise anybody called for jury service

S: Well a bhikkhu for instance couldn't do so. Or if he did he could do so only on the

understanding that he threw all his weight into acquitting the person accused, whether they were guilty or innocent. Whether the rules so to speak laid down for bhikkhus in the old days are applicable to a member of the spiritual community here and now that is a separate question, in principle of course they are. So you know one has also to consider the question "to what extent do you co-operate with the State?" It is probably practically impossible to separate yourself from it altogether. Recently have had this interesting case of the woman who refused to pay her taxes. You must have been reading about that in the paper. There was a woman who didn't want to pay her taxes because the Government was spending money derived from taxation on armaments, on defence. So she wanted to pay [62] which she specified. And it looked as though she was going to win, but then it all suddenly reversed and it was not possible. Obviously one can see why the State considers it not possible. I mean, the essence of government, of course, is that it taxes its citizens and the Government elected by the Citizens in principle at least or in theory at least, decides how that money is to be spent and not the individual citizen as such. But these questions do arise, So therefore it is a question of where do you draw the line?

v: That would also seem to imply that you should not engage in politics in the normal sense, either in terms of top political parties or holding public office.

S: Yes, ... but I don't think it is quite so simple and straightforward as that. Because for instance, traditionally in Eastern countries the bhikkhus traditionally support and bless the Government, regardless of what that Government is like, at least they give their blessing. Sometimes very terrible kings have received the blessing of the Sangha. so I think also that it isn't as simple as that because you do actually possess power. So how do you use that power? I think it is more a question of finding a modus vivendi and using that power as it were in the interests of love, subordinating the power mode to the love mode, rather than abolishing the power motive altogether. I think it is only very exceptionally that one can operate in society according to the love mode, A good example of this is the relationship between parents and children Sometimes in bringing up children, you have to use force. You may have to stop them doing something just because you are stronger than they are and you can stop them doing it. I mean in principle at least, you are free to stop them doing something which you know and they do not know is going to be harmful. They might want to swallow some poison, they might see some pretty pills in a bottle and they might want to swallow the lot. Well if they insist on opening that bottle you will forcibly have to take away that bottle. So why do you do that? You are not really operating according to the power mode, you are operating according to the love mode, but you are making use of the power mode. Now I know quite well that what I'm saying is quite dangerous and clearly it can be misunderstood and misused, but we cannot therefore shrink from making that sort of statement. That is the sort of model as it were. It is a very simple example, I mean there are many other more complicated situations where it wouldn't be so easy to see what to do.

v: But does seem that the implication is that all times one should be aware of, like ground, basic principles, sort of in the sense that "Metta Rules".

S: Yes, it's a question of nirvana is supreme, Karuna is supreme, Metta [63] is supreme, not force, not violence". So operate according to the love mode as much as you possibly can. Never operate according to the power mode when you are able to act according to the love mode Never try to invoke power to do the work which can only be done by love.



v: Do you mean can only be done or can as easily be done?

S: Can only be done. You know like for instance you might want somebody to love you . You might love them so you want them to love you. So you are not going to bully them or beat them into loving, but this is in fact what people sometimes try to do. If you are to win their love at all it can only be through love itself, not by force.

v: The Take the ... if you develop the power mode, which quite a lot of people do in society, then they try to get all their needs by that method.

v: Yes . Yet there are some needs which can be satisfied in this way, even though it can be undesirable to do so. You can take food forcibly. You can't take love forcibly but some people try to do that, I mean the power mode is quite out of place in personal relations. When you use power, to the extent that you do use power, you abdicate the human relationship. You abrogate the human relationship ... you are just a stronger animal, a bigger and stronger ape-man. You are not acting in a truly human way. But you live after all in the jungle, so sometimes you cannot act in any other way. You could say, when you play football, all right to get back to the favourite example ! (laughter) are operating according to the power mode or the love mode, or what is the situation?

v: It all depends what -?- it is.

S: Well let us say it a wholly healthy one and this operates, the game takes place in the context of the FWBO laughter]

v: The power mode.

S: Is it as simple as that?

v: No

v: Is it possible to always divide everything between operating in the love and the power modes?

S: Ah, this is really the point that I was raising as in the example of the parents and the child. What is happening in this respect when you play football?

v: You are trying to achieve integration. laughter] You are trying to get your play so that you can fully experience power at the [64] your power artistically. It is the same as skill and power. And also you like your team to be integrated to be able to play vigorously and skilfully together, interact together. So you are trying to achieve integration both for yourself and your team.

S: how would you express it using the expressions love mode and power mode

v: I would say you are trying to achieve an integration of love and power.

S: No, I wouldn't say that. I would say you are subordinating power to love. You use power, you use force because you play in a football team with your bodily energy. You know you

bump into somebody, you may even charge, I believe that is the term, you charge somebody, you try to knock him over, ... loud laughter] well you are using physical force. But what is the fundamental purpose from the FWBO point of view, of playing football at all? Well presumably it is a form of communication. You are trying to communicate. It is a form of communicating with other people. You see what I mean? So you could say that the principle here is the love mode, ideally. You want to get into closer communication with other people and your playing is an expression of your goodwill and your friendship. But you are using your physical force. So you could say that the mode is operative here, that is the fundamental principle, but it is using the power mode in a subordinate way. Just as the parents who love the child used their power, their physical force to prevent the child doing something harmful to itself. So ideally it would seem to be like that, if you could justify it at all it would be, it would have to be in those terms. So the integration comes in with the power mode being subordinated to the love mode. You have power, you have physical energy, what are you going to do with it? You cannot sort of abdicate it completely. All right, you subordinate it to the love mode. In that the integration presumably exists.

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END OF TAPE

Bob: ...set of rules. You Know a certain way of getting the ball going again ... so long as they are playing with in accepted rule of fair way getting the ball they're not surely operating from,, the power mode?

S: Oh yes you are! You are operating ... you are using power. It is not your ultimate basis but you are operating with power on the basis of love, presumably.

Mike: You are sort of defining that every action a human being makes can be defined as coming from the power mode or the love mode ... those two exhaust

S: Yes. One can certainly look at it in this way.

Pete: I think ... like in a debate ... having an argument with someone else you are kind of using power, your intellect to defeat them, but at the same time you are doing it for the purposes because you are finding out the truth.

S: Yes I think everybody knows from experience the nature of the difference between arguing with somebody and being in a really negative frame of mind and getting really angry with them and getting a bit nasty perhaps and arguing with them, but with fundamental good will, even though the argument is quite vigorous. These are two quite different things.

Pete: In a sense you don't really want to beat them but at the same time it is not just brow beat them down.

S: Yes.

Mike This goes back to your points on competition which you made in a seminar over a year ago. I think the example of the ... we'll say some running event or something like that where you get that clear contrast. If it is sort of at any cost, fouling the other person, you cannot say there is any love in that at all. I think it is sort of competition to stimulate each person to his

highest ... I think there should be an incredible sort of wave of friendship running back and forth.

S: Yes, you can be quite happy to be beaten. Because the man who has beaten you has enabled you to stretch yourself to your utmost and enabled you to know just how far you can go and you just admire him for going further. You don't feel angry or envious... I mean ideally that is the situation. So you just have to watch that that does in fact remain the situation. You know, that the game or whatever it is doesn't switch from being fundamentally according to the love mode to being fundamentally according to the power mode. You know when your supporters start throwing broken bottles into the pitch ... well then clearly things are getting out of hand.

Clive: The possibility of open communication in a situation like that, a game like that, you should be able to openly criticize and openly praise [66] are being operated on the power mode as their main principle, then the likelihood of negativity attaching itself is quite possible.

S: yes I was going to say the thought occurred to me, that you could say the referee is the representative of the love mode because he is there to see that the rules are observed I (laughter) He has power to ensure that. He has got the power to send a player off! So if you disobey the referee what does that really mean? You are operating entirely according to the power mode. You are no longer recognizing the love mode is more fundamental. Maybe it is significant that in modern sport, in so many areas that the referee is being increasingly disregarded and disobeyed as far as I know, as far as I have read ... even sometimes beaten up by angry players.

Mike: I remember reading about an American football match and the referee was killed by incensed supporters of one side.

Murray: In relation to children how would a Buddhist relate to say spanking a child?

S: Are you asking "would a Buddhist while remaining a Buddhist spank a child"? Well I put that in exactly the same category as my first example. I mean with children, who are young animals to a great extent, as with say dogs, sometimes you cannot get them to stop doing something except by inflicting physical pain, unfortunately.

Supposing you take away that bottle of tablets which you know is lethal, which you know that the child would hate to swallow. Suppose you lock it up, all right, the child finds the key, all right, it unlocks the cabinet, all right you take it away, the child kicks up a fuss. As soon as your back is turned again it is after that bottle of tablets. What are you going to do? All right you spank the child. Which means ... which the child interprets correctly as meaning that trying to get at the tablets will be followed by the experience of pain and so it is. What else can you do? You cannot reason with the child. He hasn't developed the reasoning capacity. So you can only have recourse to force and even the infliction of suffering, unfortunately. I would say, if you feel that that is un-Buddhistic and some people may feel that, then you should not have children. But if you do have children you must accept responsibility to exercise force in the interests of the child itself.

Murray: It is interesting because I can think of situations where the children have indirectly

run house-holds through the mothers. There was no control, there was not discipline put on to the children, it was just chaotic.

S: Yes I was reading a little time ago, I cannot remember who, but somebody who went to the States and he was invited to lunch by a University professor or lecturer. And the whole family was at lunch and they were joined by [6?] [this next page is missing from the transcript] the lecturer's thirteen year old son who behaved disgracefully, was rude, shouted, banged his plate on the table poured orange juice over the table cloth, and was a really disgusting little bastard. The father made no attempt to check him and when he sort of rudely left the table the father said, "Thank you for joining us for lunch son". Well he should have knocked him down and beaten him ! (laughter) Well if he'd done that just once or twice, gently, when the child was much younger, all that wouldn't have been necessary would it? I think this is just terrible. It is very bad for the child I am convinced.

Of course I think the more positive the atmosphere of the family the less recourse to force there will have to be. It may be absolutely minimal. Sona has discussed this with me. He had in the past, once or twice to spank his little girls because they'd just got so naughty and beyond their mother's control. He spanked them,,, not very hard, but enough and it has done the trick. So I don't think one can avoid this. I don't think one can be a responsible parent and not adopt this attitude. If one feels that one cannot bear to invoke the power mode to any extent, you certainly cannot be a parent. It would be irresponsible of you to be a parent. Anyway does anyone disagree?

Mike: It just seems quite important because a lot of parents I have known they sort of admit if they've any awareness afterwards that usually when they come to spank the child it is at least nine tenths for the relief of their own bottled up tension and anger.

S: But that is not good,... you see they've left it too late. They should have done it earlier when they weren't too upset. I mean, you know what happens is that they refrain, they put up with the child's racketing around them, bad behaviour and then they get really exasperated and let fly.. and maybe spank the child harder than it actually deserves that particular time. Then the child is left with a sense of injustice. And also, "What' s happened?" "I did it so many times, I never got spanked, this time I did it and I got spanked and very hard!" And the child is puzzled then, not knowing whether it is allowed or not allowed.

Pete: It doesn't know what to associate it with.

S: No. So I mean, if a child persistently does something which you say it shouldn't do, well the first stage is to take the child very seriously and very firmly, "You are NOT to do that, if you do that, Daddy is going to spank you and it will hurt." And the child will know if you mean it. If you don't mean it, the child will know and it doesn't take any notice. But if the child does it again once, "All right, I told you, didn't I? I told..."

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Pete: I suppose if you basically when you're dealing with animals, when you are dealing with the world, then you have to be worldly, to that extent.

S: Yes, as I said in the Theravada tradition, the bhikkhu will not accept responsibility for inflicting pain or suffering in any way and this is a perfectly consistent attitude. But the lay

man even in the Theravada there are laymen, not every body can become a bhikkhu, the layman had to accept the responsibility of inflicting some minimal suffering, even if it is to his own children in the course of bringing them up.

Pete: Surely though it could actually be unskilful not to do that in some situations.

S: It could be. But then the Theravada does believe that it is possible for some people so to withdraw from the world that they will not be involved in that situation at all, which means other people would do things for them. Or that you could argue that they are being as it were violent accepting pain, like Theravada bhikkhus do believe they can eat meat provided that it is not killed for them or by them. But others will say, you are still responsible so it is not possible to eat meat and not be responsible for the death of animals.

But the principle is very clear, that the love mode is superior to the power mode and if you use the power mode at all it must be in the strict subordination to the love mode and better, if you can, operate in more and more the love mode. That is the principle.

Cieron: I think though, some people might mistake for the love mode something like; not taking action.

S: Yes or just give in. Right, well that is why we entitled this issue of the newsletter "The Fierce Friendship", yes, friendship must be fierce, it is not an anaemic sort of milk and water kind of thing. You can really sort of tell somebody off out of friendship and good will and concern for him.

Cieron: So all your examples relating to the parents and children, I think go even much further, like with the children coming into the centre...

S: Yes. I think one is quite justified in giving them a smack, but of course you have to be mindful too, because some of them have got a father and fathers may not like their precious little offspring being smacked by somebody else, so you have to bear that in mind too. Ideally get the father to do that smacking, talk to the father if at all possible. Or you may have to invoke the protection of the police, which is unfortunate, but may be necessary at times in certain circumstances.

Murray: What do you feel about capital punishment, like in the States.. people get shot out of hand for nothing and the person's out of prison in ..

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S: Yes, well this is quite unjust you could say. But none the less I cannot say that I am therefore in favour of capital punishment. I couldn't say that. But I do see the injustice of that sort of situation.

Clive: This is why it is possible of a Buddhist to be in a position of responsibility within society as it is at the moment? You know in certain respects you'd actually be responsible for seeing that justice so-called was carried out?

S: Well if it were genuine justice that was being carried out there might be some consolation in that. Very often one cannot feel sure that that is in fact the case, to that extent one

dissociates oneself from the society so far as one can.

v: Well even if it was genuine say. If someone shot someone else ... therefore it is justified to put them to death. Could you justify that?

S: Well the extreme example is could you function as the hangman yourself? Most people say, well no, they couldn't. I mean this is the position of say Christmas Humphreys. He was asked many a time, in interviews on radio and television how he as a judge could sentence someone to death, and his answers have always been "Well I regard myself as an instrument of Karma. That person's Karma is coming to him through me, I am an instrument of Karma". I think that this is quite a dangerous sort of position to adopt.

Mike Did he actually sentence people to death?

S: Oh yes. Before the death penalty was abolished in '58. And also as a prosecutor, before he became a judge, he demanded the death penalty. I mean of course he was the prosecutor in one famous case where he secured a verdict of Guilty, demanded the death penalty from the judge, got it, the man was executed and was afterwards found to be innocent. That was a famous case.

Mike: Did he say he was an instrument of Karma after that?

S: Oh yes, he has said it very recently. He said that he really believes ..that this is one of the things that brought him into Buddhism, the Law of Karma. And he believes that, as a judge, he is executing the Law of Karma. I think if he was pressed he would say that he believes that the British legal system, on the whole is an instrument of justice and therefore of Karma. He seems to believe this. How he would explain that mistake, I don't know. Well he said "Even Karma sometimes makes mistakes" I don't see how he could say this, because he is very fond of the expression "The Iron Law of Karma", as though it couldn't possibly make any mistake. But he might say, well even that person who was found to be innocent, must [69] have done something in one of his previous lives which caused him to be "unjustly", inverted commas, punished in this life.

Mike It does smack a bit of rationalization.

S: Yes, but he just could about sort of get away with it, perhaps, in that sort of manner. I mean, he'd certainly have a proper answer, there is no doubt about that, and a very definite one.

Clive: He is been responsible, quite directly for the death of another being. So how does he get out of that for his own Karma?

S: Well, his position seems to be that one can be as it were a neutral instrument of Karma. But that is not really possible according to Buddhism. I mean, even the Bible tells you that, ... there is a verse in the New testament, attributed to Christ, when he says "Woe to him to whom the offence is due. But woe to him through cometh the offence". Do you get the meaning? That is to say, it is your Karma that you suffer in a particular way, the person, who is causing you to suffer in that way, even though it is due to your past Karma, is himself creating Karma for which he will have to suffer in due course. It is not that you can be purely

neutral, as it were, empty instrument of Karma. The fact that you punished someone is itself a Karmic activity, the consequences of which you will have to suffer in the future. Christmas Humphreys seems not to see it like that, as though you can be an instrument of Karma without yourself creating Karma.

Cieron: Does it depend on a number of volitions ...

S: Well yes, take the Abhidharma, the Theravada would not agree that you can punish somebody, even as a judge, even justly, without unskilful mental activity, in the form of hatred. There is a subtle hatred present which caused you to sentence and to punish that man and on account of that you will, that is bad Karma, unskilful mental activity, and on account of that you certainly suffer. This is the Theravada point of view. The Mahayana had not gone into it quite as far as that, I think.

Mike: It seems that the one escaping loophole is possibly very much your motive for doing that thing to a person, like sending him to prison, it is fairly clear cut. But say, very hypothetically, you had a penal system which instead of being penal, punishing, but was a genuine reforming one i.e. the person condemned would actually be helped, which puts it more in the category of spanking a child... On the one hand it is like aggression but on the other hand if you are acting out of love for that person..

S: Well the Mahayana doesn't even say ... well certainly the Vajrayana says that the Bodhisattva can act out of love and even kill beings. But that is a very extreme point of view, even if it is true in principle. Well the [70] ordinary human being, who is not a Bodhisattva, would hardly take it as a criterion for his own action.

Mike There is the case of Marpa who sort of inflicted terrific punishments on Milarepa, you get the very strong feeling that it was out of love of Milarepa that he did all these things.

S: Yes . or there is the famous or best example of the monk who assassinated the King of Tibet, who was persecuting the Dharma, he was supposed to be a Bodhisattva. But you know it is very easy to sort of gloss over those sort of things. so one could perhaps leave open the question of whether a Bodhisattva could actually take life out of compassion. So far as oneself is concerned one has got to ask "Am I a Bodhisattva of that sort?" Am I so imbued with compassion that I could do this?" Probably the answer would be almost certainly not. So you are left really with the Theravada position .The Theravada has always sort of quite uncompromisingly maintained that one cannot take life except with an unskilful mental attitude... However subtle. This is safer in practice. It is safer to accept this principle in practice.

Andy: To do something as unskilful as taking life you would have to be sure that you do it for a purpose which is very skilful.

S: You have to know what you are doing, According to the Vajrayana, you have to be able to understand the mental state of the person whose life you are taking and what would be their fate after death and be able to guide them on those postmortem planes, help them on those post-mortem planes. This is why Tibetan followers of the Vajrayana believe that their eating meat is justified because they say that the lama under whose direction the animal has been killed, is able to guide its consciousness to a higher level. Well if that is possible, yes surely

eating meat is justified. But the factual question is, is it justified? I mean the factual question is one which Tibetan Buddhism sometimes just doesn't ask or doesn't consider sufficiently, let us say. All right, we agree that a lama could do this, all right we don't question that, but is Rimpoché so and so, that kind of lama,? He eats meat, all right is he able to do this? Is he really and truly able to do it and how may we know? We mustn't just allow ourselves to be bluffed or be misled, by humbug. The Theravadins in some ways are on a much safer and stronger ground, they provide in this respect a more reliable guide to actual conduct. When they say well you cannot take life without there being even a subtle unskilful mental state on account of which you create de meritorious karma and on account of which you will eventually suffer yourself. I think that is a safer and more reliable guide. [71] ..harm, so to speak, for the sake of somebody's ultimate good. There are such situations but they are strictly limited and must be very straightforward, as in one's own child, when it seizes a bottle of tablets or a box of matches. One cannot apply this on a large scale, for instance, waging war on another country... for the sake of liberating that country from alleged oppressors. One cannot apply it on that scale.. there is too much room for rationalization.

Pete: I cannot help thinking though that like if you are in a situation where it is either you or someone else and ...if you are being held at gun point by a terrorist or something, you have got to make a snap decision on what you are going to do and somebody hands you a gun, I don't know that I'd be too concerned about whether I was sort of acting with a pure motive, I don't know whether that it would enter into it.

S: Well if it doesn't in a way the whole incident takes place on a subhuman level. You are back in the jungle, it is you against him... If one considers it in that light. Are you going to get him before he gets you? Fair enough.

Pete: Is it just that alone? I mean you have got to consider that this person, are you more valuable than that person?

S: Ah but then you did make the proviso that you sort didn't have time to think!

Pete: I was thinking that I wouldn't have time to deliberate on it! (Laughter)

S: Yes but if you didn't have time to deliberate and your reaction was purely instinctual: have to get him before he get me, well yes, then you are in the jungle.

But there might be a situation in which you think very quickly and you weigh up ... "Well my life is worth more than his, who is this wretched terrorist chap?" Of course it might be Milarepa in disguise,.. you don't know. But assuming you can sort of weigh up, "Well my life is more valuable than his, I mean, why should he behave in this sort of way? Right!" Bang. you shoot him. I mean you could say that this was in a sense morally justified at least in some sort of social morality,... you could.

Mike: I wonder is it not just a waste of time trying to justify that... that could actually be positively harmful to yourself, to try to justify that without actually accepting what you had done... you know, recognizing the state you were in and maybe even recognizing that that is what you would do under similar circumstances again. Then at best, it is going to be a stimulus for you to try and develop.



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S: Yes I think under those sort of circumstances you'd act out of instinct. And afterwards you'd have to accept what is the action of an instinct, instinct of self-preservation ... "All right, no need to feel guilty about it, but none the less I did take life. That is an unskilful action I will make amends for that."

Murray: How would you make amends to Karma and neutralize it when you have killed a human being?

S: Well you make amends for taking life by as it were giving life or enhancing life, the quality of life for other people. That is how you make amends by ... you sacrificed that person's life for yours. All right, you'll make amends by sacrificing your life, your time, your energy to other people.

Clive: You'd have to make sure you weren't working actually from a basis of guilt.

S: Oh yes, if you are an ex-Christian, you'd have to make sure of that... You should feel regret, but not guilt.

Clive: Killing another being ... in a sense it doesn't matter who he is, even if he is a really bad man. But Karma, it just counts that you've killed another being, good or bad...

Pete: Well I was thinking you are in a situation where one of you is going to die, so I mean what is the most skilful action? You know is it more valuable that you should actually continue..

S: Well that is assumes that you understand that person and not only what he is now but what he could be and yourself likewise.

Peter: You've got limited data.

S: Yes, I think that you really don't know, because people can change. I mean suppose that terrorist might shoot you, say. As a result of shooting you he might experience remorse. He might discover that he had shot a Buddhist and he might have read a book about Buddhism at one time and he might think "Well, I did a really bad thing. Why? Because I am a terrorist Well let me give it up, let me make amends." You don't know. So in some ways it is better you should react instinctively like an animal, just leave it at that and ... reflection at that stage would be very inhibiting. (laughter)

Pete: Not to say dangerous.

Murray: It seems to me that say, speaking in terms of a Theravada view, that it would be better just to take the bullet as it were ... let the guy shoot you if possible to maintain the Buddhist precepts right to the very end.

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S: Yes. The chances are also if you showed no fear.. and were quite willing to be shot, that itself would have a disarming effect, there is that possibility, you cannot be sure of it, there is no guarantee, but it might have that effect.

Clive: I think that actually that these days quite a lot of terrorists are highly trained and they don't let that kind of thing interfere.

S: That may be, that they are not amenable to human influence. That's right! If you can play for time and start talking and develop a human interest, to that extent you are winning. It is more and more difficult for them to shoot you the better they know you. If you are just anybody and they don't know at all, it is relatively easy.

Clive: I would say that as far as killing goes that is quite different than other situations you might find yourself in where you could defend yourself in a more instinctual way ... like being mugged, let's say where you could hit back. It wouldn't be killing, but where you actually know that you are going to kill somebody you might decide, make the decision yourself, that you are not prepared to take the responsibility of that and then just be killed yourself.

S: I was going to ask as a matter of interest, has anybody here ever actually killed anybody? Any human being? No. I didn't think that they had. So we don't really know what it is like. But at least some people who have taken human life say it is not like any other experience. That to take human life is a very serious matter and according to Buddhism, the deliberate taking of human life is what is called weighty Karma, [Garuka-karma?] which must inevitably produce consequences within the present or certainly within the next life, that karma, the fruits of that karma cannot be delayed or deflected. So I am quite sure in the light of all this that when you take a human life you feel very differently. It makes a tremendous difference to you, to your experience and your feelings about yourself. If you're free from Christian conditioning you no doubt wouldn't feel guilt in some ways you'd feel something worse than guilt, guilt being neurotic. I mean whatever you felt then being non-neurotic. You'd feel as though you'd done something very heavy and it is interesting that in the Pali there is this expression garuka-karma, which is literally "heavy" karma. You feel that you've done something very heavy.. interrupting the course of another human life. And this is where,, that I want ... why Buddhism regards abortion so seriously. It does regard the taking of human life and therefore abortion is prohibited, so to speak for Buddhists.

Pete: Why is it such a weighty Karma? I mean you are breaking up this pattern of the person's life, lives, so why is it particularly I mean [74] especially in the case of somebody whose apparently quite a bad type.

S: It is because every body wants to live ... it is the natural tendency of the whole organism to hang on to existence. So if you take another person's life you are opposing them and denying them and negating them in the strongest possible manner. And this is what the Theravada at least understands by hatred, this negation of the other person. And to the extent that you are negating the other person in a sense you are also negating yourself. You are repudiating all bonds of sort of common humanity between you. You are sort of asserting a sort of complete self isolation . You are cutting yourself off from another human being and in a sense from the whole of humanity. This is why the murderer is traditionally regarded as the outlaw. He is not just the enemy of the person that he has killed, he is the enemy of the whole of society. He has placed himself beyond the pale, as it were.

Pete: But are all killers necessarily murderers?

S: Well, I suppose there is the distinction in law between murder and man slaughter.

Buddhism's thinking in the form of the Abhidharma phrases itself very carefully. It is the deliberate taking of life, the intentional taking of life. You can of course under certain circumstances become really angry and hit out at someone and kill them without being guilty of murder. But you are certainly guilty of anger and unmindfulness. But I mean one can make a distinction between killing and murder. It is murder primarily that the Theravada and the Abhidhamma is talking about.

Mike: There is a Western distinction that one had to watch out for though. I mean war is not considered really a crime to kill and it would seem to me that in any Buddhist system one cannot really distinguish between war-killing and murder.

S: No. War-killing would be regarded by Buddhism as murder. And so would mass killing from a distance, even though you don't know the individuals whose lives you are taking. You intend to take the lives of anybody that you can, say dropping a bomb, from a mile up in the sky would be regarded as committing murder.

Mike: Similarly presumably manufacturing bombs.

S: And in the same way you don't actually know as a person, the unborn child but that is still regarded as murder, because the deliberate intent to take that particular life, which according to Buddhism is a human life from the beginning.

Clive: What kind of consequences, what type of situations would be brought about by that weighty karma?

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S: Oh painful and disagreeable situations and according to tradition situations in which you will be likely to suffer in the same way, to cut short your own life and subsequently to suffer severely.

Murray: I had an interesting experience. I lived with a man who'd been in the SAS for about three or four years and he undoubtedly had a very severe mental tendencies as a consequence of killing people. He had to deal with that ... like he would come into contact with the FWBO and it was like the FWBO was so direct that he was unable to handle it, like he'd listen to your tapes and he had quite a lot of contact, but just those mental tendencies repelled him from the light as it were, from doing something that was at least right which is a very severe consequence.

S: Well I remember we had a woman Mitra, at least we didn't have Mitras in those days, who was one ... came to see me one day and she said her problem was that she had had an abortion and after the abortion she had felt that she couldn't do the Metta Bhavana where she had been able to do it quite well before. I mean clearly the two things were connected. I don't know how she got on subsequently, perhaps she was able to get back into it but she say me quite a while after, maybe a year or so after the abortion, which is when she told me she hadn't been able to do the Metta Bhavana since. So you know the taking of life even though there is a discussion whether when you procure an abortion you are taking a human life or not, whatever it may be, even if you know the entity in question isn't fully human, what ever that might mean. Still the action is as it were a quite serious one and can have quite serious psychological repercussions, certainly for the mother to be. So I think that one shouldn't look

upon these things at all lightly. I think nowadays there is this tendency on the part of some women themselves to look upon abortions very lightly. Why, for some women it is just like cutting your fingernails or something like that. I mean they are just fooling themselves if they really think that - well it shows they are just alienated from their bodies.

Mike: There is a point there that I've sort of been thinking of ... whether it allows one really to lend any support to political moves which would restrict abortions? There are two sides in me. There is the one side saying "Well, I'm not one to encourage abortions". On the other hand "Do I have the right to make the decision for these people, these women, because it is not me that is going to be having the abortion. Is it up to me to stop them from making their own decisions?"

S: Well this presupposes of course that it is the decision or should be the decision only of the woman.

Mike: Well of the women and perhaps of the man involved in that case.

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S: Well no because I mean there is the point put forward rightly or wrongly that society in general is the natural spokesman of those who cannot speak for themselves so in this case the unborn child. There is that point also put forward. I mean just as society also upholds the rights of animals. The animals cannot speak for themselves. So it isn't just the woman who is involved. It isn't just the man responsible who is involved. It is also the third party, so to speak, certainly from the Buddhist point of view.

Andy: But also laws are there to help people act skilfully and see what the issue is about ... in a sense. Because people aren't individuals who will not act skilfully always. So you have got a structure that is more like a sort of cultural thing to help...

S: Then of course on the other hand coming back to your point one just does start wondering when one finds oneself, for even one particular purpose, in the same camp as the Catholic church. So you say "Well If I go along with that in this issue will it create an impression that I am going along with them in other issues too?" You know you wouldn't want to create that impression. In fact you might believe that those Catholics who are campaigning against abortion are doing it entirely for the wrong reasons and one would just not wish to be associated with them at all.

Mike: There are complications in that, say the child, the unwanted child gets born and what is to happen to it unwanted say, to an unwed mother? There is a further complication also that you ban abortions so basically make more illegal abortions as well, maybe not as many illegal ones as legal ones, but illegal ones where the mother's life is in danger too and the whole atmosphere about is probably even worse than that of.

S: I would say in regard to these wider issues outside the Movement itself it is as though you cannot intervene at all without, in any way without doing some harm. So all right! Don't intervene at all. But within the movement we can certainly do something. We can make it clear that the Buddhist point of view is that abortion is a very definitely unskilful action. Therefore you discourage women from within the movement from having abortions. Which means also that you suggest that men and women alike are more responsible with regards to

that which precedes even the possibility of abortion, namely conception. You urge them to adopt a more responsible mindful attitude. And if the woman is convinced as she should be, if she is a serious Friend, Mitra or Order Member, abortion is out. Then you see to it, if she is having a family that she gets all the moral support and practical help from within the Movement that she needs. So that she herself is happy having a child and the child itself arrives in a positive situation and also gets from within the Movement all the help it [77] needs as it were on a positive group level. So there one can do something.

Bob: Do you anticipate that as the New Society gets bigger that we will develop a system in which children will be brought up, you have said quite a lot against the family, so if we are going to abolish the family are we going to provide an alternative?

S: well, We don't abolish the family so much as abolish the nuclear family. I mean you have got males and females that means you have got potential mothers and fathers. Some of those potential mothers are going to become actual mothers and some of these potential fathers are going to become actual fathers. Whether they are,... even though they happen to live in Women's communities and Men's communities or even Strict women's communities ! (laughter) It'll happen somehow ! (laughter) Well all right, that is the situation, well what are you going to do about it? Well I think the best thing is that after birth the child remains with the mother in a community of either women or women and children. The girls remain there indefinitely, the boys remain there until they are old enough to move into a men's community. I mean the age to be determined according to the needs of the child. I don't see any real problem in this at all. It seems quite straightforward.

Pete: Do you think that a boy brought up in a women's community would be OK.?

S: He should be removed much earlier than the girl needs to. I mean I am not quite sure what the best age would be, but I don't think that a boy should stay beyond say eight years. After that he should be,. maybe there should be communities that.. where men who especially want to devote themselves to bring up and educating boys. Communities in that case would be perhaps schools at the same time, until the ... just talking off the cuff a bit. You could have a spiritual community-cum-school. I mean at Padmaloka we've got a community member who came when he was fifteen...

End of Side A

...originally only a temporary arrangement. He was supposed to be staying with us until his parents moved to Norwich and going to a school

from Padmaloka which he did for a while. But that arrangement had broken down because he decided that he didn't like school and he liked Padmaloka very much and wanted to be a member of the community. So there you are. It has happened, though rather at a later stage. So he seemed to have passed through school relatively unscathed. He joined ... he is the son a Friend well in fact his father originally was involved with the movement too as well as his mother who ... he'd been brought up in a nuclear family in a remote part of Wales where they moved to some years ago. But he has moved into the community straight from that situation and seems to have made the [78] transition quite successfully. But I hope if we do have children coming in at all that the boys would at least come into a men's community much earlier than that, and have their schooling there, not as it were go to school. I mean a lot

depends on the nature of the local school. I'm sure some local public schools, when I say public, I mean in the American sense, not the English sense, will probably be good enough. Some will have a reasonably positive atmosphere. But we could also consider having our own schools which are communities for men and boys. One must beware of cutting off too much from the outside world. I'm a little concerned about that too. You know we want to create the New Society, but we don't want to live in a ghetto, if you know what I mean ... even a spiritual ghetto. We need to keep up some contact outside. So we don't want to sort of bring a boy up entirely within the FWBO in such a secluded way that the first time he goes out by himself and sort of has to buy a train ticket and get a train he sort of does not know what to do and is all at a loss. I have know monks like that in the East. I remember a bhikkhu came with a whole party of bhikkhus on pilgrimage to Calcutta from Thailand and he was a little fat elderly monk of about 55... he'd never been out of the monastery! He couldn't cross the road by himself he was scared to cross the road! So in Calcutta what happened? He'd go out with two young monks and when they came to the edge of the road he would hold one of them by the hand on this side and one by the hand on that side, close his eyes and when t e were ready run across the road! (laughter) He'd never crossed the road in a city before in his life. He was about 55. So we don't want that sort of thing happening do we? I think it is very unlikely.

Mike: One implication of this sort of thing is that boys and girls from the age of about 6,7, 8 will live separately from their sort of peers of the opposite age.

S: I think that is desirable. I have thought about this quite a lot. I think that mixed education even with the ordinary secular point of view is not desirable. I think that there are differences between the sexes which do exist and which need to be recognized and that boys and girls need a different kind of education, a different kind of environment. And boys especially need it I think, at the impressionable age of say, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen fourteen.. I think a lot of harm is done by this sort of unisex attitude in recent times. I mean one recognizes yes that individuality ultimately transcends sex, but one doesn't achieve that by denying or obliterating all manifestations of the physical sex to which you belong. I know that there are intermediate types and I know there are transitional forms, but broadly speaking, what I say, I think, holds good.

[79]

Mike: One of the reasons I'm wary is that I went to a boys' school in a culture where most people go to mixed schools from the ages of thirteen to eighteen and had nothing to do with any women vaguely of my age for that five year period. And I found it very strange afterwards coming back in contact at University and the whole experience made me very suspicious of single sex activities and the Friends until I'd actually experienced ..

S: But I would say that a single sex situation outside the FWBO is quite different from a single sex situation inside.

Mike: Well I was just wondering if inherently in adolescence it was as if it simplified the issues, but in a sort of false way. I wonder if one of the strengths of the single sex thing for the Friends is that the people actually in them create the situation, create the positive aspects of it. Whereas adolescents in a sense would ... well children, the situation is created for them by adults.

S: Ah, but this is true for children in every respect. Situations are created for them by adults,

it cannot be otherwise. They cannot create their own situations. So one cannot get around that. One therefore has to think: What is the best situation to create for them? I think I've come to the conclusion that the single sex situation is the best. When I say single sex I don't mean that the boys and girls are entirely segregated all the time, because within the context of the FWBO there would be occasions on which they met. I mean at least at the festivals and celebrations which would be quite a positive ambience for any such contact.

Clive: But they would live separately?

S: They would live separately. Their bases would be separate.

Murray: This brings the question of the whole difference of between man and woman. The other day I went to see some old friends and I was talking about this difference between men and women. But in terms of rational argument I got absolutely trounced on this particular occasion. I mean their whole line was that the only difference between men and women is that a woman has breasts, therefore she is more useful until such time as she finished breast feeding the child and after that there is no difference. Rationally trying to explain was exceptionally difficult.

S: Well I think in a way it is probably a mistake to try and explain rationally because people can think in that way at all only because they are alienated from themselves as they actually are, their bodies and their feelings and their instincts through a one-sided rationality, an alienated rationality. So you are trying to invoke the devil to cast out the devil. So that is whatever the approach may be but I think it is not that ... or that [80] can be only a very very small subordinate part of it.

v: I think there is another point in that sort of thing: which is that probably the reasons why they they're so vehemently in favour of arguments that make men and women exactly the same are very little actually to do with men and women being the same or different, but due to some sort of attitude or problem in themselves. Because at a dinner party about a couple of years ago a Catholic launched into me about egalitarianism, about Buddhists being vegetarians and all the rest and it was quite obvious that that wasn't really what he was talking about at all.

S: Yes, but then in that case one has to discover what in fact they are concerned about, that leads them to be concerned with this particular issue as a sort of pretext or to use this particular issue as a sort of pretext. That may not be easy to discover. Anyway I think we had at least better finish this one verse before we pack up (laughter)

"He is not a recluse who harms another; nor is he an ascetic who molests others".

Well it is pretty much the same as we did. Instead of Pabbajito, the one who is gone forth, there is samano. Do you know what samano or samana or sramana is?

: Novice monk.

S: that is sramanera.

v: A seeker?

S: No, the literal meaning of the word ... that is one aspect of the question, what it actually meant in the Buddha's day. The literal meaning is explained in two different ways. Some say a sramana is one who is washed, one who is pure. Some say it literally means that. Others say that it is connected with the word [asrama?] someone who makes an effort, one who strives, that is to say for spiritual self-development. But in the Buddha's day, there was a distinction between the brahmanas and the sramanas. You have heard these expressions again and again in the Pali texts ... brahman sramana as a sort of compound ... brahmana sramana. The brahmanas were the priestly caste, that is to say those who believed in the Vedas, those who believed in the caste system and so on. The Sramanas were those who rejected the Vedas and rejected the caste system and were very often wanderers. Do you see the distinction? These were the sramanas. The sramanas were also paribrahmakas?,... the brahmanas were not usually paribrahmakas, the brahmins usually stayed at home, were householders with families, wives and children, performed ceremonies, invoked the gods and so on. They were sort of more conservative. But the sramanas more often than [81] not were those who went forth, who not only rejected the household life rejected the traditional religion, rejected the claims of the brahmins to be superior, rejected the claims of the Vedas to be a religious authority. So you see what I mean? So that the Buddha recruited his followers mainly from those, that is to say his bhikkhu followers at least, from those who were not only paribrahmakas but also sramanas. Who had not only gone forth from the social life but who had rejected the traditional religion as practised by the brahmins and the traditional social system as represented by the caste system. So this was the sramana. So ideally a sramana was one who had not only gone forth from sexual life but as we would say rejected the religious establishment. The sramanas more often than not were not theists. The Jains were sramanas, there were many different groups of sramanas. So in the eyes of his contemporaries, the Buddha was the leader of the biggest and most popular sramana movement. So sramana broadly speaking is equivalent to bhikkhu, so they are sometimes used interchangeably. The bhikkhu is the more Buddhistic term in a way, bhikkhu suggests more one who depends upon alms, observes certain rules. The sramana makes the contrast with the brahmana. He is the "non-orthodox", inverted commas, religious aspirant, the free lance if you like. When a lot of these freelance people joined up together and they made a Sangha. So the sramana represent the sort of spiritual ideal of giving up the whole sort of life. Giving up outworn religious traditions and so on

So therefore just as ... "he is not a recluse who harms another; nor is he an ascetic who molests others" even interferes with others in any way. So a sramana also has to be one who operated according to the love mode, not according to the Power mode. So paribrahmakas, ... bhikkhu sramana, muni. these are more or less equivalent, but there is a difference of emphasis in each case. As I mentioned yesterday, in the days of the Buddha the terminology wasn't standardized in the way that it became later on. Sometimes bhikkhu and arhant are used as meaning the same thing.

v: Sariputra and Moggallana were sravakas before.

S: Yes, they were paribrahmakas and sramanas before they became bhikkhus, before they became members of the Buddha's Sangha, before they became the disciples of the Buddha and followers of his special Dhamma. So terminology was very fluid in those days.

Mike: Was Dhamma also used by other teachers in their teachings?



S: Yes The Buddhists simply say The Dharma, but in those days you had to say that it was specifically the Dharma taught by Gautama the Buddha that you were following.

[82]

Mike: so was there in fact a Mahavira Dharma?

S: Yes indeed. which we nowadays call Jainism. That is the only one which has survived in an organized form. But there were other well known teachers at that time. A list of six is often mentioned apart from the Buddha himself. They all proclaimed a Dharma, they all had a sangha or gana or panishad? These terms were also used. Now we always use the word sangha but sometimes the word gana is used, sometimes the word panishad is used. So I think it is good to remind ourselves that in those early days of Buddhism as revealed by some portions at least of the Pali scriptures, things were much less fixed, much more fluid than they subsequently became. I mean the Pali scriptures, some portions don't always reveal orthodox Theravada Buddhism, that developed later really. Sometimes in the Pali scriptures especially works like the Sutta Nipata, we see a very different early sort of not very organized, not very standardized state of affairs. We sometimes forget that.

Lets leave it at that...

End of tape 4.

All right we'll go on to Verse 185:

"To speak no ill, to do no harm,.. to practise restraint in the fundamental precepts, to be moderate in eating. to live alone in a secluded abode, to devote oneself to meditation, this is the advice of the Buddhas"

Anupavada, anupaghato, patimokkhe ca sanvaro, mattannuta ca hattasmin, pantan ca sayanasanan, adhicitte ca ayogo, etan Buddhan sasanan.

This seems quite simple and straightforward doesn't it? Anyway lets have a look at it more closely. "To speak no ill, to do no harm, to practise restraint in the fundamental precepts "Anupavada, anupaghato, patimokkhe can sanvaro. The translation given by Buddhadasa is pretty literal. Upavada is just speaking ill, Upaghato is harming, attacking other living beings and obviously not to do either of these two things is an essential part of the Buddha's teaching. Pattimokkhe ca sanvaro, what is this pattimokkha, or pratimoksa in Sanskrit?

Mark: It is the divine instructions.

S: It is or it is what eventually became the Vinaya rules of bhikkhus. Buddhadasa is a bit cautious here, he translates fundamental precepts, the word pratimoksa literally means a releasing or unbinding. Why exactly the fundamental precepts or list of the fundamental precepts was termed pratimoksa, [83] nobody really knows, there is quite a discussion amongst scholars about this. At least as nobody knows, one cannot say very much about it. But there is this growing list of precepts, it seems in the early days of the Buddha's teaching, during the Buddhas own life time, the list of fundamental precepts was rather short, but later on especially after the Buddha's Parinibbana, the list grew longer and longer and eventually in the Theravada there were 227 precepts to be observed by the bhikkhus. 220 were observed

individually, the remaining to be observed collectively. They were rules of procedure. In the Sarvastivada there were 250 of these precepts altogether. Sometimes the Pratimoksa referred to a list of 150 or 152, the rest being more rules of etiquette than ethical precepts. But anyway one had this list of fundamental precepts and the Buddha says here to practise restraint in the fundamental precepts :It is not so much to practise restraint in them, I think his English is a bit at fault here, because if you were to say practice restraint In the precepts, well it mean to observe them in a strange manner, not to observe them too much, I think that is not the meaning of the translator. The actual meaning in English is to practise restraint by means of the observance of those fundamental precepts. So one really needs to understand what is meant by Sanvaro or restraint.

Murray: You restrain the passions, you restrain your desires through the rules of conduct.

S: It is not so much desires, usually the texts speak in terms of restraint of the senses including the mind, there is a natural tendency for each of the senses to seek out its appropriate object, the eye goes towards forms, the ear as it were goes towards sounds etc., the mind goes towards mental objects, so there is a tendency on the part of the senses to go towards their appropriate objects and very often without distinguishing whether that is skilful or unskilful. You see what I mean? So that the sanvaro or restraint is the checking of the senses until you have ascertained whether the movement of the sense organ towards the sense object is skilful or unskilful, Conducive to one's spiritual development or not. An example which is often given nowadays is of the eye automatically adverting to say advertisements in the underground when you are sitting in the train as you go up the escalators and walk down the passage ways, you are bombarded with advertisements of various kinds for all sorts of worldly things. So usually what happens the eye adverts automatically, the appropriate sense organ in this case the eye quite automatically directs itself towards its appropriate object, in other words visual forms in this case the hoardings the advertisements. But what one is supposed to do from the Buddhist point of view is to check the eye, check that particular organ, ask oneself if [84] well is it going to help me, is it a skilful thing to do to gaze at these advertisements as I am sitting here or as I am walking along here or as I am riding up here, is that a skilful thing to do? So you check the organ you restrain the organ until you are sure that it is going after that particular object, it's appropriate object, is in that case a skilful thing to do. Or you might be sitting in a hall, say, listening and the ear, the organ of hearing is picking up on certain sounds and these are sounds of the dharma, the dharma is being taught, so you know that yes, it is good it is a skilful thing to do, it will help me to listen, so not only should you allow the sense organ, the ear, to go towards its appropriate object, it should make sure that it does so in as a concentrated manner as possible. So you see restraint is really concerned with checking conditioned reflexes you might say. We have got in the habit of allowing say the senses to go, just go where they want to go, without due consideration of whether that is skilful or unskilful. So the restraint or the checking doesn't represent any force of repression or crushing of the senses but only a checking up from time to time of whether the activity of the senses, the senses pursuing certain objects or attending to certain objects is conducive to our development as individuals, or not. So this is called the restraint of the senses. sometimes it is called "guarding the gateways of the senses", here the senses are conceived as it were as passive, the psycho physical organism is like a city with gates and at the gates of the city in the old days there were guards just seeing who was coming in. So in the same way you must set guards as it were on the gates of the senses and watch impressions come in, because some impressions will give you rise to skilful mental states and others will give rise to unskilful mental states, so don't make, allow in the gate of the senses those impressions which are

likely to give rise to unskilful mental states, this is another way of putting the matter. For instance suppose you are on retreat, and you are trying to concentrate you are trying to meditate, then suddenly you hear in the distance maybe some rock music, so you don't allow that impression entry, you don't allow your mind to dwell upon it, because you know that if you do if you start attending to it and humming it over in your own mind, it is going to give rise to all sorts of thoughts and cravings, which have got nothing to do with the work of concentrating and meditation that you are now trying to engage yourself in. So you stop that particular impression at the gate of the sense, that is to say in this case, the ear, You do not allow it to come in, you do not allow it entry, you just stop it there and after a while your mind breaks off from being concerned with that particular impression.

Murray : What is the method of stopping it? You don't just chase it as it were?

[85]

S: Well first I mean first you have to recognize it, you have to sort of not allow the reactive process to start up until you have ascertained what sort of impression it is and what sort of effects it is likely to have upon you. So you sort of look at it, mindfulness comes in, for instance you hear as in the example I gave, you hear the rock music in the distance, "Aha, rock music, now what sort of effect does that have on me? Be careful . It doesn't have a very good effect" or even it if has a good effect, "it is not the sort of effect that I am concerned with now, so I won't listen to it, I'll just put it out of my mind, I'll bring my mind back on to my meditation" or if say I am walking outside in the grounds, "all right I'll go indoors and walk up and down there, so that I don't hear this any more" or "I'll start reciting my mantra so that I have got something else to occupy my mind with, but I will not allow that impression in, I'll not allow my mind to dwell on that impression or turn it over and over". That is the sort of way that one deals with this.

So in the days of the Buddha great importance was attached to this apparently by the Buddha himself and the monks were always being advised to guard the gates of the senses and this was especially easy in the Buddha's day, because life was so much more simple. The Buddha usually gave just one example, he used to say "suppose, there is a bhikkhu and he is going for alms in the morning to the village and he is going on his way he passes a pond and in that pond village maidens are bathing and he allows his mind itself to direct through the eye to that particular sight thereupon there arises in him such and such unskilful mental states. This is the sort of example that the Buddha gives. So therefore he advises the monk as soon as he becomes aware that his mind through the eye is adverting to impressions or allowing in impressions which are likely to give rise to unskilful mental states he should at once take steps to divert his eye from those particular objects and become very recollected. So that was just the sort thing likely to happen in the Buddha's day, in the case of the monk.

But in modern times, life is much more complicated because we are being bombarded by impressions all the time from all directions. And it is very very difficult to practise that sort of mindfulness and awareness and guarding the gates of the senses in the city. You could say in the old days if you had your walled city with gates, all right there is a guard at the gate, so an old woman comes, so he has a look at her, OK., let her come in, then a cart comes, all right stops, looks at that lets it in, but supposing you had just this one guard there and instead of just one old woman coming there, and then a cart, there were tens of thousands of people all clamouring to get in at the same time, could one guard possibly deal with them all? But that is how it is if you live in a city nowadays. [86] There are thousands of impressions clamouring

you have only got to pick up your copy of Time Out, just leaf through a few pages, there are hundreds of impressions pouring in giving rise to all sorts of mental states, one after another, so quickly that you cannot keep track of them at all sometimes. So if you want to practise in that more intensive way really guard the gates of the sense you just have to go away into a retreat centre, you have to at least live in the country where the flow of impressions is restricted and where therefore you can deal with them where they are more manageable.

Clive: I feel that my guards have been flattened from quite an early age. And even though in certain situations like at Padmaloka there are not many sense impressions coming in they are still face down in the mud (laughter)

S: Well the modern idea is not that you should have any guards on the gates of the senses at all, that you should just let everything in or let everything hang out as the case may be. But what the Buddha is basically saying is "Don't allow yourself to react to impressions instinctively and without proper thought and awareness. Don't be merely reactive." If a biscuit is put in front of your nose, you don't have to start salivating immediately, not if you are a human being. You see what I mean?

Murray: So the activity of the senses it is like biological and habitual you just gravitate towards...

S: It is not that the activity of the senses is bad or anything like that, of course when one says senses one always includes mind here in the Buddhist context, but one must get out of purely reactive patterns, that is the basic point here, you must make that transition but from reactivity to creativity and one of the ways in which you can do that or an aspect of the process of doing that is checking one's habitual reactions through the senses to the sense objects, again including the mind and its objects. I mean say supposing you are from America so someone makes a joke about Americans, well automatically you get upset, well you should check that is that is an automatic reflex re-action. Usually people would think 'well what is wrong in getting angry? It is natural if you get angry You are an American and someone is always cracking jokes about Americans,' but that is not the Buddhist point of view. You should overcome that reactivity. And similarly you hear say dance music, you don't have to automatically start dancing to it. You might decide that it is a good thing to do, not that you sit down and have a discussion with yourselves though you might need to do that to begin with, it is just a split second thing almost, whether you let in the impression in or not, you can train yourself to let in the impressions that give rise to skilful mental states and to keep out all the time those impressions which give rise to unskilful mental states. You experience the [87] impression, you are not blocking off the actual experience of the impression but you are not allowing any mental state of an unskilful nature in dependence to arise in dependence upon it. I mean in other words you are here in between the result process of the mind and the action process of the mind, if you go back to the nidana chain, you remember that? In dependence upon ignorance to use that expression arise the karma formations in dependence upon the karma formations arise the consciousness in the womb, in dependence on that consciousness arises the nama-rupa, the whole psycho physical organism name and form, in dependence on name and form there arises the six sense organs, in dependence on the six sense organs there arises contact with the external world, in dependence upon contact with the external world, there arise feeling, pleasant painful and neutral and in dependence on feeling, especially pleasant feeling there arises craving. So that is the gap where you are sitting, as it were, that is where the result process terminating in feeling and sensation gives rise to the action process

beginning with craving; so you want to prevent that craving from arising, not just prevent craving arising, that is the negative side only, but to produce {synthesis} in that situation not craving but faith, which is the positive counterpart and in that way start going up the spiral, instead of round again in the circle. so you sort of station yourself at the gate...

Murray: So it is faith at that point, that is the actual practice of the Buddha's teaching there.

S: No. there is a little more to it than that. The gate say of the city, when there is a gate in the city wall is sort of in between the city and the outside world. So this point in the nidana chain is in between the result process and the action process, so you are sitting there at that point, just like the guard sitting at the gate and you are scrutinizing the impressions that you receive. You are scrutinizing your whole experience, especially as emotionally toned or feeling toned. And instead of automatically grabbing hold of pleasant experiences and automatically thrusting away painful experiences and so on, you just consider them more widely and you allow your reactions, to use that word, all right they are not really any more reactions, to be determined by considerations of skilfulness and unskilfulness and those impressions which you experience which are likely to give rise to unskilful states, reactive states you don't encourage, those which are likely to give rise to skilful states you do encourage. So faith here is just the positive emotional counterpart of trsna or craving, it is the seed of creativity just as the craving is the seed of reactivity.

Mike: So faith in this case is not the same as sraddha then?

[88]

S: the word is sraddha but it is not obviously not yet fully developed. You may not have a very definite or clear faith in say the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, but it is just that ... well I have called it that seed of creativity. And on the negative side of course it represents a negation of reactivity. You are being creative because you are not just reacting automatically, instinctively as perhaps an animal would, you have awareness, you have self-consciousness you are able to ask "well what is good for me? Does going along with this experience accepting this impression incorporating it into my being help me? Or does it not help me?" You are able to choose. You are able to decide.

Andy: An act of creativity is always preceded by some amount of faith.

S: Yes, one could say preceded but on the other hand one could identify the creativity with the faith itself, the faith with the creativity certainly at this stage. Because the fact that you are have decided not to go round in the same old cycle suggests that you have at least a sort of feeling for something higher, some other alternative and that is where the faith comes in. And it is a feeling for that, not just an abstract idea about it, it is a feeling and you act on that feeling and you do not react in your old usual way.

Mike: It seems to me that that point is like a still point, it is like an inner calm, in contrast to the normal thing, it is like a flow that is continued where you don't have control of the flow. It is an inner calm, so in the underground sometimes this advertisement-that one is looking at suddenly looks differently, so instead of you seeing it the way that the designers meant you to see it, you are probably seeing it they saw it when they put the pieces together as if you are seeing its constituents more.

S: You do not necessarily have to turn away your eyes under certain circumstances you may. But you may continue to direct your gaze to that particular object, to the advertisements, and initiate a whole series of highly skilful reflections upon it. I mean that is possible. For instance you might, there might be advertisements for holidays, sunny beaches, so you might think, "Ah, that is really beautiful, how nice it would be to go away and sit and meditate under those palm trees, in the sunshine, what a good meditation one could have." You might initiate that sort of series of reflections to bolster up your determination to meditate, or to remind yourself of what a positive experience meditation was, or you might reflect, "Look at that beautiful deserted beach, how beautiful it would be just to be there all on one's own without anybody, away from it all". So it does mean that you don't always have to be turning your eyes away from things. Sometimes that is physically possible, without actually closing them, but you can initiate [89] and as it were in direct opposition to the intention of that advertisement, a whole series of reflections which will help you in your personal development, your spiritual life. And there is no limit to this. If your mind is sufficiently strong. Certain things the impressions may be so powerful, and so intrinsically unskilful that the best thing that you can do is to turn away. Even then however quick you are, there will sometimes be an after image in the mind the impression has just got in through the gates, you have not been quite quick enough, it has been too strong and too quick for you

Andy: Ideally if you look at a beautiful woman, you could say the pleasure I could get being with her is the same I get from meditation.

S: That wouldn't be very skilful (laughter) You should say it is ten times as much or a hundred times as much that would be more skilful.

Bob: You could say that you would teach her the Dharma (laughter)

S: No maybe you should reflect if I am not careful she'll teach me a thing or two (laughter)

Mike: Actually it is a reason to take up yoga really seriously because you see all these sexy advertisements in the underground, my first reaction often is that what a terrible back she had got, her ankles are horrible, and she'll have arthritis of the knees in about five years time. (laughter)

S: Well that is an interesting variation on the *asubha bhavana*, the recollection of impurity. But anyway you see the general principle: one is concerned with stemming reactivity and an interesting point arises here, that when you just follow your instincts, when you don't think, you are purely reactive, a purely reactive creature just like an animal, there is an appearance of spontaneity, but when you start guarding the gates of the senses and checking the reactive impulses, you may lose a bit of that animal, well, "spontaneity", inverted commas, and there may be an intermediary period when you are a bit awkward or a bit slow, because you are just sort of stopping from time to time and thinking, You are sort of checking your reactivity but your creativity is not flowing properly, you are sort of in between. So sometimes your friends will notice that a change has taken place, you are not as lively and bright as you used to be. And they may think that there is something wrong with you but actually it is not so. You are in the process of switching from a sort of reactive spontaneity, if I can use that rather contradictory expression to a creative spontaneity, which is accompanied by mindfulness and which is intrinsically skilful. Have you ever noticed this sort of thing happen?, Sometimes you can see with some people in a quite marked kind of way. You can almost see it

happening. Formerly they might say just whatever they might be thinking, without thinking, but now they check themselves, they are a bit more serious, they ask themselves, "well [90] what do I really mean, what do I really think, what do I really want to say, is it the right thing to say, so they sort of hesitate, pause, they seem at a loss for words, whereas before they might have been very glib, and quick and smooth, actually it is an improvement, though from a social point of view it may not be an improvement, they may become socially awkward, which perhaps they weren't before, because they are making that sort of adjustment.

Bob: Is that the difference in being in a study group with you and being in a study group on a Monday evening in a Mitra class? One tends to think twice before...(laughter)

S: Well, twice is all right but not more than twice. Otherwise you might not say anything at all.

Mike: this could happen more than once though. You can go through a process like this and maybe six months later you will have to go through it again

S: Yes, as you encounter reactivity in subtler and subtler forms, and as your creativity becomes more and more established, more and more genuine. Sometimes people in the world so to speak they don't understand that. They think that something has gone wrong, that you have deteriorated since you have taken up Buddhism, in certain respects, but this is one of the things that can happen and cause them to think in that kind of way.

Mike: the terms that I have heard is that one has lost one's quick wit and repartee and that one has lost one's cutting edge.

S: Well there is no need to lose it but you may appear to have lost it because you have using it, more skilfully, in a way that is appropriate and not come out with your little witticism on every conceivable occasion. This can be rather tiresome and inappropriate, but you are using it now rather than being used by it. It is not an automatic mechanism, so that as soon as people press the button, out you come with your witticism. No, one is able to use it where it is appropriate. But in the mean time, there may be an impression created of awkwardness, of hesitation, that is perhaps inevitable.

Anyway this has grown out of a consideration of restraint, sanvaro. Restraint of the senses, guarding the gates of the senses and so on. But the Buddha does say here Restraint by means of the pratimoksa The Pratimoksa, lets take it as Buddhadasa translates it the fundamental precepts. Well this is pretty obvious, the precepts from one point of view are a sort of check list. Take the first precept, the first of the ten, that is that you should refrain from attacking or harming living beings, so you have a sort of instinct to check or to harm other living beings, [91] don't you? If they try to interfere with you or to harm you, that is your natural reaction isn't it? Your animal reaction, one could even say one's spontaneous reaction, but it is the reactive spontaneity. But there is a precept here, the precept is saying well, when you experience that natural urge to retaliate, to harm somebody, check yourself, that is one of the situations in which you have got to check yourself. So in this way, the pratimoksa, the fundamental precepts, provide a sort of checklist of those sort of situations, those typical situations, in which you are especially required, or which you especially need to exercise restraint. The first precept sort of says well, watch yourself when you start feeling violent, watch yourself, check yourself. Don't be reactive, or when you when you feel an impulse to

grab sometimes something that doesn't belong to you, Watch yourself. And so on; so you see in what way one practices restraint by means of the pratimoksa, it is a sort of aide-memoir of those sort of situations in which you are likely, or those particular objects with regard to which you are likely, just to behave re actively without any consideration at all, without considering the consequences, or of skilfulness or unskilfulness.

Of course one has to be careful not to think of the ethical life simply in terms of observing lists of rules, this has happened to some extent in the case of the Theravada. But these rules if one uses that term at all, are helpful, or can be helpful at least as a sort of aide-memoir to the sort of thing that one is supposed to doing or needs doing.

Bob: Do you think that a system that has got 257 rules does have some value, certain merit? It does seem to me an absurd corruption of the spiritual life.

S: I think there is a danger of legalism if you have too many rules. And I'm not saying that rules are not a good thing, or at least a healthy thing or that they cannot be helpful, but I think that what you have to guard against is yes, what is usually called legalism. Do you understand what I mean by legalism? That you have done enough, in fact you have done everything that is needed if you observe the letter of the law. Of if you observe the rules quite strictly, that is enough. So what is that a form of in terms of the fetters?

Murray: Adherence to rites and rituals

S: yes, it is. Sometimes you find this in some religions more than others You find it among orthodox Jews, if they observe the law, the Torah, strictly, that is enough, that is all that is expected. In the same way the ... among the Christians if you observe the commandments, and [92] in the same way among the Hindus among Brahmins, if you observe all the dietary restrictions and so on and among Buddhists, and especially Buddhist monks if you observe all the 227. But the fact is that you can observe all the rules and from a Buddhist point of view be a completely undeveloped person. Because you can be observing the rules in a purely external, mechanical way, not for a certain purpose, not as a means to growth, just because the group expects you, just because you enjoy honour and respect if you observe those rules. So even supposing you observe those rules quite faithfully and scrupulously that will not be enough. If you think that it is enough and that you can get by so to speak, just by observing the rules however correctly, however admirably, that is one of the fetters. Because you are leaving out of account your attitude. That is why we say in the context of the Friends one should not think in terms of being a good order member. You can see the point? You can do all the right things as an Order Member, be saying all the right things and still not be making any progress at all as an individual. Because progress doesn't take place in that sort of way. You are putting the cart before the horse. Instead of being a good order member and doing certain things and saying certain things to help you to be a good order member, you think that if you just do those things and say those things that will amount to you're being a good order member, which is not the case. So in the case of the FWBO there is less likelihood of people committing this sort mistake, partly because there is just a much shorter list of precepts, there is only ten, which are really quite enough in my opinion. Sometimes I think there is ten too many, eh? I mean as precepts. Not that one shouldn't observe those things but as a list of precepts. In a way it seems all implied in the refuges, but nonetheless, just to make it clearer these principles are there, so all right we have ten precepts just to have some basic rough and ready guidance. But the spiritual life as such or individual development as such can never be



reduced to the observance however scrupulously, however sincerely, of rules.

Mike: that would be mistaking Sila for the rules rather than for ... I mean it would be ignoring the whole purpose of it.

S: Of course the question arises, why do people ignore the whole purpose? I think it comes down to the fact that they want group approval, and in this case they have mistaken the spiritual community for a group. A group which extends its approval to those that observe its rules.

Bob: So is there virtually nothing to be said in favour of the rules of the pratimoksa that the Theravada uses?

S: I thought about this quite a lot, not only as regards the Theravada but other religions including Brahmanism. I have written about it, you may [93] remember, in connection with Brahmanism in the Thousand Petalled Lotus. I have described a friend of mine in ( ), an orthodox Brahmin who rigidly observed all the rules, and I have mentioned that that seems to have given him great strength of character in a way, so observing the rules very rigidly will certainly give a kind of definite stamp to your character, but at the same time there will be a great deal of rigidity. you may have, yes a strong character from the group point of view, and that may be very useful and effective in the group, but it won't be really of much use from a spiritual point of view. Unless of course you go through that stage comparatively early and develop that strong character within the context of the group with the help of strictly observing rules and then gradually grow out of it afterwards, relax and be not so strict. Or rather you don't have to say not be strict, in a way you are being stricter because you are using the rules, instead of just allowing the rules to use you.

.Clive: It is as if you confine yourself to within the rules until such time as you grow bigger than them.

S: Yes. You outgrow them. But to the extent that you are undeveloped, to the extent that you are still a group member you need to live by rules, at least to some extent, just as in the case of the child. There is a rule bed-time is at 8 O'clock, that is good for the child, but as he gets a bit older, well he can be left to his own devices, let him go to bed when he feels tired ...

End of side A.

S: And also one may find as a result of one's experience that however many rules that you have, and that however many rules that you are observing, they don't cover all the circumstances, they don't cover all the situations, and then you have to think for yourself. The mistake lies in, you know if you elaborate rules upon rules, so as to cover all conceivable contingencies. This is legalism with a vengeance, which in some religions they try to do. You get quite a bit of this in Orthodox Judaism as well of course among the Brahmins of India and some extent in the Theravada.

Mike: It seems that it always comes back to sort of principles, the roots out of which the rules grow and why are following that, you are trying to break down greed, hatred and delusion, always going back to how you feel yourself, why you personally are bothering to make the effort to grow.

S: Right, the basic principle here is that you cannot really abdicate [94] personal responsibility. You cannot just sort of hand over the responsibility to the rules. "If I am observing the rules, I don't have to think about things any more, I am quite safe, the rules are there, all I have to do is observe them and I am OK", that is an abdication of moral and spiritual responsibility, which means that you give up trying to be an individual. Even though observing rules, even a lot of rules may help prepare the way, by making you a good group member, a good positive group member, there is that possibility, but if you want to develop individuality, you cannot follow that particular path.

Cieron: I felt that a bit yesterday when we were talking about the bhikkhu who couldn't give evidence in court. I felt it was a bit like getting out

of some sort of responsibility there. That actually from being responsible.

S: Yes you can quote the rules, "that is what the rules say", and shrug your shoulders and forget all about it. This does definitely sometimes happen in some situations. It is like the child saying, "Well that is what Mummy says or that is what Daddy says" and they don't have to think any more.

Anyway perhaps that is sufficiently clear. But let me give a little further example then. Supposing you happen to meet and get into conversation with someone outside the FWBO and supposing they ask about how we do things in the FWBO, they ask about this particular matter, that particular matter, and you just say "well this is how we do things in the FWBO," and suppose they raise some objection and you instead of discussing that and trying to convince them rationally you say, "well that is the way we do things in the FWBO" as though that really settles it. You see what I mean? So you are in a way are falling back upon rules. You don't sort of try to explain to the person why we do things in that way, what is the function, meaning, purpose of our doing things in that way. You just say "well, that is the way we do things", as though that closes the argument. So here again there is a bit of that Sila paravata? Or if you say, "Well that is the way we do things in our Centre" talking say to someone from another Centre, well that settles it, you don't intend to enter into any discussion, any communication.

Andy: In groups you have certain observances and customs, which don't have any particular meaning in themselves, but the main point of them is that everybody observes them, so that they remain part of the group.

S: You can only justify these from a spiritual point of view if you can point out what is the actual functions that they fulfil so far as the development of the individual is concerned. Somebody might say well you sit and meditate in your community at seven o'clock every morning, why do [95] you do that? And you say "It is just a rule of the community". You don't say "Well meditation is an-essential part of the spiritual-life, meditation represents an attempt to raise the level of consciousness, by acting directly on the mind, this is what we are trying to do in the community and seven o'clock is a convenient time to meditate, because everybody is there, it is before breakfast and we are able to meditate together and we meditate together because by meditating together we mutually reinforce our efforts". But instead of explaining that, you say "oh, well it is just the rules of the community, that we meditate at seven o'clock". You see what I mean? You are falling back on rules instead of understanding and explaining the principles of things.

In Christianity, if people ask someone why do you do this or why do you do that, well, they bring god into it, "well this is what god says, that is what God has told us through revelation." But if you are not careful, if you are a Theravada Buddhist especially, you will say "Oh that is what the Buddha says" or if you are another sort of Buddhist you will say "Oh that is what the Guru says" and for you it isn't to be questioned. Maybe it is all right for you to adopt that attitude in a sense, but you cannot expect anybody else to accept whatever your Guru says as sort of Gospel, you have got to convince him on some other, presumably rational, grounds.

Mike: It would seem almost that the test of a valid rule that it is not permanent, but that it changes so that even the precepts, which as I understand it, in the Vajrayana they're often, apparently, dumped, some of these precepts and that in practice one gets back to more fundamental, whereas you take a Christian group or something, the rules become, they form part of a rigid structure that is an attempt at permanence

S: Well those rules that don't relatively speaking change in Buddhism are those rules which represent permanently valid conditions of the spiritual life itself. You could say well there is a rule "thou shalt grow", but if you state it like that, it seems absurd. If you try to observe the rule that you should grow just because it is a rule, you certainly won't grow.

Murray: Also the fact remains though that until you are able to observe the Law, it is hardly likely that your own position to be able to do with out it in the sense, for example, killing animals.

S: Yes there are no-short cuts. All right lets go on to the next line. What Buddhadasa translates to "be moderate in eating," that is : Mattannuta ca hattasmin; that is a literal translation. To be moderate in eating, but what is moderation?... Anyway it seems to me that this [96] line exemplifies all the points that we have been talking about so far or making so far. Because after all food is one of those things that produces sense impressions. Food appeals to three sense organs at the same time, the sense of taste, the sense of touch, the sense of smell. Oh, and sight too. You don't hear food, well you can hear the sound of cooking or you can hear a little woolly lamb bleating if you ..(laughter)... so when food comes into contact with one or another or all of the sense organs or something which is regarded as food whether actual or potential the senses are at once stimulated. But here you must ask yourself obviously well is it skilful or unskilful. It isn't a straight forward question of yes or no, it is also a question of how much and this is where the moderation comes in. But what is moderation? How is one to decide? Can there be a rule? That moderation consists in such and such quantity of food, is that possible? Or such and such kind of food, is that possible?

v: No

S: No? Why is it not possible?

Murray: Well your needs differ.

S: Your needs differ, so can there really be hard and fast rules about food? No, that is why the rule is left as moderation in eating. Moderation is the principle. You cannot lay down any specific quantity because it will be too little for one kind of person, and too much for another. Can you lay down even the frequency of eating?

v: No

S: Well some forms of Buddhism do. In the Theravada one of the rules for the bhikkhu is that he should not take [vikala bhodjana?] which means untimely food. Now that is interpreted to mean food after twelve o'clock midday. So ... in the Buddha's day, or at least not all the time, because this rule according to tradition itself was introduced only some years after the Buddha started teaching, this rule was understood to mean, that you took virtually just one meal a day, if you were a bhikkhu. You just went out on your morning alms round after a session of meditation, you went out about nine or ten o'clock when people were cooking, you gathered enough for your one meal of the day and you finished it before twelve o'clock. But the rule came to be understood as after twelve o'clock, i.e. so that whatever you ate before twelve o'clock was not considered untimely. So you could eat as many times as you liked, before twelve o'clock. There was a great debate as to what is twelve o'clock? But that is another matter. But the practice among Theravadin bhikkhus today is that you eat three meals a day, but all before twelve o'clock. If you suggest that [97] the bhikkhus were to eat two before twelve and one after, they would be horrified, if they were strict Theravadins that you would be inviting the, to break the Buddha's rules. Buddhaghosa, the great commentator, who in many respects is not a fool, but nevertheless referring to this rule does say that provided that you eat, finish your eating before twelve o'clock you are considered technically a one timer, a one-mealer. He said even though you eat a thousand times, have a thousand meals before twelve o'clock, so this is in my view legalism with a vengeance, but I'm afraid many of our Theravada friends just cannot see it. It seems so obvious. And the Buddha here says in this particular Dhammapada verse, moderation in eating, that seems to be all that one really needs to say. Moderation. It doesn't matter whether you eat before twelve or after twelve twice or once eat just what is necessary to maintain physical health and vigour. that is the principle, don't eat for greed, don't eat merely because you like the taste of the food. This does not mean that you should not enjoy what you eat. But don't eat merely for enjoyment. That is neurotic. If it is a healthy enjoyment of the food that you need, that is quite positive, that is not unskilful. But to eat food which you don't need which is even bad for you, harmful for you, which isn't really food, because all that is eaten is not food, that is neurotic. From that point of view, smoking is neurotic.

So moderation that seems really all that one needs to say. And all that the Buddha here does say. So there is no need of rules.

Bob: What is the rationale or origin of the twelve o'clock rule?

S: Well in the Vinaya, there is an account of how originally during the first few years of the Buddha's career as Buddha, the bhikkhus went a second time in the evening or towards the evening, but there is the story in the Vinaya Pitaka itself, that one bhikkhu went rather late when it was already dark and stood at a house door for alms, a woman came out without knowing that he was there, saw this sort of figure standing there, thought it was a ghost, shrieked, and had a miscarriage, so the Buddha prohibited the bhikkhus from going out on the evening or indeed after twelve o'clock. That is the traditional account. But even according to that account it is a purely accidental circumstance, not to do with eating itself. But the rule had remained that the monk does not eat after twelve, but that is understood as meaning that the can eat as many times as he likes before twelve, as this results in some really curious situations. I have been in viharas where from eight o'clock in the morning, the bhikkhus are agitated about their eleven o'clock meal that they shouldn't miss it. that it should be in time,

and if lay people have come to cook, they will say "hurry up [98] make sure that the food isn't late," they get really agitated and then when eating time comes, they stuff themselves with as much as they possibly can, especially young monks because they know that they are not going to get any more until the following morning. Or sometimes in some quarters, there are all sorts of exceptions, for instance the Buddha did say that a monk who was sick could take medicinal food after twelve o'clock so what is medicinal food? Medicinal food is [guillam pasa?] It is butter oil, sugar candy, molasses and honey and sometimes lay people make these five things up into sweet meat and the sick monk is allowed to partake, but what is sickness? So if the monk is not feeling too good, or even if he is feeling a bit hungry, you know because there is text which says hunger is the worst of diseases (laughter) so you find sometimes in some viharas at five o'clock they have a regular meal of these things, And I did find in Thailand, they maintain that there is a sub-sub-commentary of the Vinaya which embodies a tradition that it was permissible for bhikkhus to take after twelve o'clock a particular green water plant, that was not regarded as solid food. So they have little cakes made of this particular green water plant after twelve o'clock. So it does all become rather ridiculous, but they all take this very, very seriously. And the lay people take it still more seriously. If say in Ceylon, a bhikkhu is found eating after twelve o'clock, even just a sweet meat in some cases, lay people would consider him a very bad bhikkhu. So the result is that many Ceylon bhikkhus take food after twelve o'clock without the lay people knowing.

I remember once I was staying in Calcutta with a very elderly Theravada bhikkhu, who was quite a jolly character, but some of the bhikkhus are not such fools as the lay people, and I was sitting with him in his room and a little servant boy scuttled in about seven o'clock in the evening with something in a big paper bag, so the bhikkhu got up very deliberately and he locked the door, and he sat down, opened this and there was egg noodle from the local Chinese take away (laughter), so he said, "would you like some", so at that time I was very strict myself and actually didn't eat after twelve o'clock, so I said "no thank you, but you carry on", so he tucked in, so, I must have looked a bit surprised, I must have raised at least one eye-brow, so he said, "Sangharakshita, I have been a bhikkhu twenty years, but not one day has passed that I haven't had my evening meal". But he locked the door and the lay people never knew. And in this particular place he used the little Hindu servant boy, not the Buddhist one to go and get from the take away, and several Ceylon bhikkhu asked me whether it was morally wrong to take food secretly, whether they really ought to do this or not, because they discussed the question quite frankly, they are usually terrified of their lay supporters [99] who are always on little witch hunts, which bhikkhus ate after twelve o'clock and which didn't, [laughter] they were really terrible, So anyway I said, that to eat secretly was wrong but to eat privately wasn't (laughter) so they said what is the difference between privacy and secrecy, so I said if you close the door, that is privately, but if lock that is secretly But there was a quite unhealthy atmosphere surrounding this whole area, of eating and not eating after twelve o'clock. Among the Theravadins, the bhikkhus on the whole, usually the Ceylonese bhikkhus, were quite sensible about it. But their lay people expected them to be really rigid, because also the lay people reason that or believe that if the bhikkhus isn't strict in the orthodox sense then the offerings made to such bhikkhus don't produce much punya for them, so they are sort, have a vested interest almost in maintaining the strictness of the bhikkhus, so the bhikkhus go along with this publicly to a great extent, but privately it is another matter. But again that vitiates the whole Sangha and that leads to hypocrisy. And this where Theravada bhikkhus say quite frankly among themselves, we have to keep up the faith of the laity because a lot depends upon that, but provided the lay people don't know what you are doing, it doesn't matter. They say that quite openly. And sometimes they are right in the sense that

they are more sensible than many of the lay people and they do understand many of them that you don't have to just finish eating before twelve o'clock, that that is not a major sin if you do eat after twelve o'clock, but many of the lay people regard it as a major sin, even though according to the Vinaya it is a very minor offence which is to be expiated by simply confessing to another bhikkhu. It is not a serious matter at all. It is one of the least important offences, but lay people in Ceylon and elsewhere make it into a major offence which in fact it isn't, even according to the Vinaya.

So this is why sometimes people wonder why is Bhante always going on about the Theravada and why is he so down on them but this is the background, I have experienced all these things, observed all these things, I have talked about all these things with Theravada bhikkhus. so I have come to the conclusion that we don't want this sort of legalistic attitude in the FWBO or in the Order, but since we don't have anything like that here, sometimes people wonder what is Bhante going on about, what is he talking about, because they don't have any personal experience of these sort of attitudes. There have been some changes in the Theravada world over the last few years, but still some bhikkhus are a bit more, as we would say, liberal now, but the bulk of the lay followers would still regard them as not particularly good bhikkhus, and food is quite a major interest, almost a central interest among bhikkhus and the laity for this sort of reason. [100] So moderation in eating, then, *adhicitta ca ayogo*. This is translated as, oh no there is also *pantan ca sayanasenan*, to live alone in a secluded abode. Perhaps we had better have our coffee first, in moderation, and then go on to that.

Mike: ... though not a static absolute, in some Mahayana schools you are

S: Some Mahayana schools at least in their popular formulations use the kind of language that suggest that they do believe in an unchanging absolute standing as it were behind the phenomenal process, but that is not to be taken literally because that would be actually be against the principles of Buddhist philosophy for want of a better term.

Mike: So does the Vajrayana then from of the Madhyamika by and large in its sort...

S: By and large it does. Though it doesn't engage itself in as it were philosophical speculation, it presupposes all that and practices the dharma on the basis of that presupposition. That particular *darshana*, that view of the Madhyamika, that perfect vision of the Madhyamika gives the Vajrayana as it were its theoretical basis, Vajrayana itself being entirely concerned with practise. Sometimes in the Zen tradition they speak about the One Mind very much in absolutist sorts of way, which can be very misleading and quite un-Buddhistic if one takes that sort of language literally and just doesn't take it sort of poetically. From the Buddhist point of view especially as developed in the Theravada and the Madhyamika is quite subtle and goes against all our habits of thought, it is therefore quite difficult to apprehend, not because it is intrinsically difficult so much as in order to understand it, we have to go against the way we habitually think. Anyway that is a bit of a digression.

All right next we come to *adhicitta ca ayogo*, which is translated as no sorry, we have missed the line *pantan ca sayanasan* which Buddhadasa translated as to live alone in a secluded abode. *Sayana* is sleeping and *asan* is sitting, literally it is lying and sitting. Yes this is quite interesting. It is not really to live alone in a secluded abode, *panta* is apparently equivalent to the Sanskrit *pranta*; it means the edge or the border, on the edge of things, so it is having one's bed and one seat on the edge of things, this is how we get secluded or even solitary. Since

your bed and your seat is a sort of way of talking about your home, it is where you sleep and sit. So having your home on the edge of things, or living on the edge of things, or living in a secluded fashion, now what do you think that means exactly? Living a bit on the periphery, but on the periphery of what?

Clive: the conditioned, the world.

[101]

S: the conditioned the world, but in simpler terms, even social terms?

Murray: The group.

S: Yes, the group. It is living on the periphery of the group. That is what it really means. So that brings out the meaning much better, not just living alone in the secluded abode, but living on the periphery of the group. And why should you live on the periphery of the group?

Mike: So you are not harmed by the group and its behaviour.

S: Yes, so you are not affected by the gravitational pull of the group, even the positive group.

Pete: Presumably if you are tied up with the group, you will find your place, your place in the pecking order of things, so if you are out of that, you can live like more an individual.

S: It also ties up with the idea of the outsider, although that has got a slightly negative, maybe even slightly neurotic touch or tinge in modern literature. But it is in a way to some extent the same kind of thing isn't it?

v: the wanderer, the lone wolf.

S: In a way the wanderer, though here it speaks of the bed and sleep, I suppose one could carry one's bed and seat around with one. But even so one remains on the edge if one wanders, one wanders on the edge or around the edge, and never get right in, inside the group, not in any real sort of way. You can be surrounded by people but you are still on the edge you are still on the periphery, you don't really belong, you are a bit of an outsider.

Mike: It struck me last night during Kamalasila's talk, that the business of being alone, that it is quite important to learn to be alone positively alone, whilst amongst a large number of people. I mean a lot of us, unfortunately know how to be alone in a negative sense amongst a large number of people But it is as if the positive of being alone in a group is dependant on being physically alone, completely alone first of all.

S: Yes, mm...

Murray: I was discussing the modern equivalent to the robe and the begging bowl is the pack and the sleeping bag. In fact there is a lot of Friends who have just got that, they haven't carried their possessions. And in terms of the consumer society that-is very much on the edge.

S: Here again there is something quite interesting in the Vinaya because the Buddha allowed the bhikkhus to just have the few bare things that they needed. But there were always

bhikkhus who were trying to get around the [102] rules, in the matter say of shoes and boots and rugs to sit on. For instance originally the bhikkhus had just a simple, well, rug to sit on as they moved around. Then a particular bhikkhu ornamented his rug with a woollen fringe, yes, so the Buddha prohibited woollen fringes. So then they started adding silken fringes, the Buddha prohibited silken fringes, so they started embroidering their rugs, so the Buddha prohibited embroidery so, this is according to tradition, so this is what happens when you try to deal with the situation by making rules. I cannot really believe that the Buddha bothered with that sort of thing because if you just lay down the principle, just have a few things, not to be attached even to them, that really looks after the situation doesn't it? But you cannot draw up as eventually happened a long list of all the different prohibited kinds of rug and footwear and headgear and so on. You cannot really deal with the situation like that, in the end it comes back to the individual's responsibility for his own development, his own understanding. If you have to lay down rules in that sort of way, you are not dealing with adults even, not to speak of individuals, you are dealing with children.

Mike There is another thing in this passage, if you are supposed to live on the edge of things rather than far away from them is this possibly because for the purpose of going and spreading the Dharma to people who are still in the world?

S: Well in the days of the Buddha, taking this quite literally, the bhikkhu subsisted on alms, that is to say that he had to go and collect food, not beg for food, but collect food from the nearest village. So that meant that he couldn't live too far away. So he was, there is a standard description, he is far enough away from the village to be quiet and not to hear any sounds from the village, to be able to practise meditation in quiet, but he is near enough for it to be a convenience, not too long a journey for him to go and collect his alms each day. It was considered that two to three miles was about right. That also gave him his daily exercise

Mike: So this has nothing to do with the Buddha's teaching to go out and spread the dharma?

S: Well one could look at it like that, because for instance when lay supporters [to use that term) offered to build a Vihara for the Buddha, where the Buddha could stay, one of the points that was made, was not only that it was secluded, that is to say far enough away from the village or town to be quiet, near enough for alms, but also near enough for people to be able to go and visit the Buddha and speak with him and hear the Dharma, that point is also made, so there is also that consideration too. Because [103] if the Buddha had made a habit of living of the midst of the jungle, he would not have been accessible to people who wanted to hear his Teaching. So yes to live on the periphery of things is a middle way between living right in the middle of it all and cutting off your connection with it completely even if you could do that, in theory you can, but in practice it is not possible. So to live on the edge of things, to live on the periphery of the group is a sort of middle way. But we find that with our centres and co-ops geographically, physically they are located in the midst of the City but psychologically and spiritually we are really on the edge of things, we are on the periphery of things, we are separate enough to be able to continue or to follow our own way of life, follow our own ideals, but we are near enough to be able to keep in touch With people and encourage them to join us so to speak.

All right let's go on to : adhicitta ca ayogo. Well we have got our old friend yoga. It is the same word. The ayoga means we can use an English word with the same etymology ultimately, it is yoked to. The translator here says to devote oneself to meditation, more



literally to yoke oneself to meditation, to harness to meditation to engage oneself in meditation. But is it really meditation? The word is *adhicitta*. Which means higher consciousness. *Citta* is of course mind or consciousness. *Adhi* is you could say higher, you have these terms in Buddhism, the *adhisila*, the *adhicitta*, the *adhiprajna* that is to say the higher morality, which is the spontaneous morality of the stream entrant and so on, which is not a matter of just following the rules, the higher consciousness of the person to whom the *dhyana* states come easily and naturally and the higher wisdom of the person who sees beyond the conceptual formulations of the Truth and has actual insight into the Truth itself. So *Adhicitta* is not just painstaking practice of meditation or concentration exercises, it is not just the effort to develop those higher states, it is the actual enjoyment of them. You could say that it refers to the actual experience of the *dhyanas*. To be yoked to, to be joined to, to be harmonized with states of higher consciousness, which is what meditation is all about. You see what I mean? It is not just practising meditation, it is more actually experiencing the fruit of meditation. Actually being co-joined to those higher states of consciousness.

And then "*etan Buddhāna sasanā*". This is the same last line as we had in the last verse but one. Before Buddhadasa translated this is the teaching of the Buddha's, now, "this is the advice of the Buddha" We went into that word *sasana* before. This is the governance, this is the system, this is the directive of the Buddha. So very often these three verses, that is to say 183, 184, 185, these are recited in the context of *vandana* or *puja*, daily as a sort summary of [104] the Teaching. *Sabapapassa akaranā, Kusalassa upasampadā, sacitta pariyodapamā, Etan Buddhāna sasanā. Khantiparāṇa tapo-tikkhā; nibbāna paramāṇa vadanti Buddhā. Na hi pabbajito parupaghati samāno hoti parāṇa vihetthayanto. Anupavāda, anupaghatō, patimokkhe ca sanvaro mattannuta ca bhaddasmin, paṇṇāsa ca sayanāsana, adhicitta ca āyoga, etan Buddhāna sasanā.* These three verse are regarded as a summary of Whole Teaching and they are often incorporated into *puja* and chanting. And they do just about sum it up in a way. don't they.

All right lets go on to the next two verses which run together.

[105]

(The Buddha, The Path, Happiness)

Held at: Vinehall Men's Mitra event

April 1981

Present: Sangharakshita, Johnny Baker (Yashomitra), Brian Duff (Dharmavira), Mark Bowden (Prajnananda), Bob Jones (Vajraketu), Mike Scherk (Dharmapriya),

Pete Shann (Vajrananda), Andy Friends, Clive Pomfret (Kevala), Murray Wright, Cieron Saunders.

Tape 6.

186,187. "Not in a rain of coins is satisfaction of desires to be found. 'Of little sweetness, but Painful. are sensual Pleasures', knowing thus the wise man finds no delight even in the heavenly pleasures. The disciple of the Fully Awakened One delights in the destruction of craving."

S: So, "Not in a rain of coins is satisfaction of desires to be found." "Na kahapana, vassena titti kamesu vijjati" The kahapana is an ancient Indian coin said by some to be of Greek origin - anyway we won't go into all that. 'Vassena' is the shower of rain, the rainy season even. So, er ... one does not find satisfaction of desires even in a rain of coins. What do you think is meant by that? Why is the 'rain of coins' involved here?

v: The happiness that people seek - say the, the calm of meditation is not to be found on the horizontal even of external sense pleasures. It's like: the 'rain of coins' will always end in betrayal.

S: But why are coins mentioned: I mean why not 'The Material. Material Wealth'?

Because well if you've got money you can buy anything material presumably - yes? So even if it showers ... gold coins ... and er ... you know, you're able as it were to satisfy all your desires - buy everything you want - still there's no real satisfaction. The word actually is "titti" which is more like "content" : content or satisfaction.

"Of little sweetness, but painful, are sensual pleasures." ... "appassada" ... "passada" means, It's quite a difficult word ... something like satisfaction - delight : "Not giving any real satisfaction - [106] delight are sense pleasures, in fact they are painful". I think we have to distinguish ... the translator gives "sensual". It is sensuous rather than sensual; he is referring to any pleasure coming about as a result of contact of the six sense organs with their respective objects - that is to say, the six sense objects, mind being included here; mind and ideas being included here. But you notice the expression "of little sweetness" That is to say: it is not said that there is no pleasure in the contact of no sense organ with sense object. That would be unrealistic; to say that there is no pleasure. But it isn't much. It is only a little, especially when one compares it with the pleasures of the dhyanas or the pleasures of developing insight. One should perhaps understand potentially painful because in a sense the pleasurable experience, even though genuinely pleasurable must pass away. One mustn't sort of absolutize it, think it is going to last forever. And even at the time that you enjoy the pleasure, through the six sense organs, you don't enjoy absolute pleasure, it is a limited relative pleasure, because you are concerned with limited relative conditioned objects. So therefore the text says that of little sweetness but painful are sensual or rather sensuous pleasures. Even if they are pleasurable they have their limitations and if one becomes attached to them, thinking that they are going to last forever, then the result can as you know be painful, the pleasure can turn in pain. So "knowing thus, the wise man finds no delight even in the heavenly pleasures." What are these "heavenly pleasures, do you think? what is meant by those.

v: Dhyanas.

S: er ... one could say dhyana, but it doesn't say that. It says heavenly. You know the idea is to think of a heaven . You know, say Indra's paradise. with beautiful nymphs and everything to eat and drink that you require. The suggestion is of very refined pleasures. You know, not gross, brutal pleasures but very refined, sort of aesthetic pleasures. They are the pleasures of culture, as we've talked about the other day. Even these more refined enjoyments, they are also transitory, they don't last forever. They also are not the absolute and unconditioned happiness of Nirvana. so, "knowing thus, the wise man," the "pandito", you'll notice here that pandito is used in a quite positive sense, not in the sense of scholar which is the modern

meaning. "The wise man finds no delights even in heavenly pleasures, not even in more refined as it were, cultivated pleasures. There is probably quite a bit to be said on this question of pleasure in relation to Buddhism. Because one doesn't want to have, one doesn't want to encourage a sort of negatively ascetic attitude. I mean one sometimes gets the impression from what some people write or say about Buddhism, that Buddhism is entirely against pleasure of any [107] sort. But the fact is that the organism could hardly exist without pleasure. After all, you have a body, you have a whole psycho-physical organism and it enjoys breathing, it enjoys feeling the air, enjoys feeling cold and heat when not in extremes. It enjoys just experiencing itself, alive. All this is pleasure, which you're experiencing through your total psycho-physical organism. So probably that psycho physical organism could not go on existing unless there was some experience of pleasure. On that psycho-physical organism is the basis for your development as an individual, the basis for your attainment of Enlightenment even. So it is not that Buddhism has a completely negative attitude towards pleasure. Buddhism does not say that all pleasure is wrong, all pleasure is bad, all pleasure is unskilful. It doesn't say that you should try to eliminate pleasure from your life. But what it does say is that: Pleasure which is a sense impression should not become the basis, should not be allowed to become the basis of unskilful mental activities especially of craving and grasping. So you see what I mean? I mean you get this sort of question arising in connection with food, That is enjoy your food. But on account of that enjoyment or because you want more of that enjoyment, don't over eat. Because then the pleasure arising from the eating of food becomes a basis of craving and clinging. So pleasure in itself is neither skilful nor unskilful. It is your attitude towards pleasure, which is either skilful or unskilful. Pleasure in the sense of the actual sense experience or mind experience it is vipaka . I mean the pleasure that experience is the end result of the result process. It doesn't belong to the action process. So you experience pleasure, You have pleasurable sensations. That is neither good nor bad, neither skilful nor unskilful. In fact according to traditional Buddhist teaching, if you experience pleasurable sensations, it is due to your having performed skilful actions in the past. It is the result of your punya. You experience pleasure as a result of the good deeds that you have done. But you must not on that account allow the pleasurable sensations, in the Buddha's own language, to "lay hold" of your mind. You experience them, you enjoy the pleasure. But you do not allow craving to arise. You do not cling to the pleasurable experience. You have it and you let it go. Which is not easy.

But it is a mistake to try to sort of guard against craving by eliminating pleasure. That just doesn't work, you can still be hankering after it, in the depths of your being.

v: The positive nidanas seem to apply that. The spiral process towards Enlightenment is just more and more...

S: and more pleasurable, yes. But at each stage you must not allow the pleasurable to lay hold of your mind. I mean the Buddha says this, describing his own inner experience, that he experienced intense bliss. But he [108] did not allow the experience of bliss in meditation to lay hold of his mind. So one must have a healthy attitude towards pleasure. Let pleasure come, experience pleasure, enjoy pleasure, whether of the senses or of the mind. But do not allow it to lay hold of the mind. And I mean don't think that it can last forever. Don't try to make it last.

But in a way that is a dangerous sort of thing to say, because it can be misunderstood, it can be rationalized and people will use this as an excuse for running after pleasure, which is of

course completely wrong. That is neurotic and compulsive. But if you go outside in the morning and you enjoy the sunshine and you enjoy the fresh air, there is nothing unskilful about that. But if as a result of that pleasurable experience, craving arises and clinging arises, well that is of course completely undesirable. So I think that it is very important to understand this question rightly. That pleasure in itself is neither skilful nor unskilful. It's the attitude towards pleasure that you take up that is either skilful or unskilful... You must watch yourself if you are going looking for pleasure, if you are going searching for pleasure, searching for a good time; wanting to go and have fun somewhere, somehow, you must really watch yourself then. But if it just comes to you, well enjoy it. Be aware and mindful, don't let it lay hold of the mind. If there is good meal put in front of you: fine, enjoy it! But don't over-eat, eat just what you need. And don't sort of go in pursuit of special recipes or very special Vegetables or spend a long time hours and hours over the stove cooking yourself up some special little dish. I mean that would be going on the wrong path.

Mike: It seems that in a sense that it is the pursuit of pleasures that is the

S: Yes

Mike: When one goes beyond pleasure as a form of happiness to a sort of consumer society where things are labelled as pleasures because they are distantly associated with happiness. One pursues these pleasures which very rarely bring happiness. And they are often sort of materializing and given an external form to oneself.

S: Yes; a book I was reading recently made a very good point that one almost always is in too much of a hurry to get on to the next thing. And that meant that one was prevented from enjoying the thing that you are actually doing now. They illustrated it from [sex, Zen?], no need to go into details, you can work it out for yourselves. But you can see people doing this, supposing there is a whole series of events during the day, supposing even on a retreat. Well take the getting up bell, then there is the morning meditation ... well supposing you want to finish the meditation quickly so you can get on with breakfast. You want to finish breakfast quickly [109] so you can get on to the study. You want to finish the study quickly so you can go out for a walk. You want to finish the walk quickly so that you can have lunch. Finish lunch quickly so you can go and play football, finish football quickly so that you can get into meditation, finish that quickly so that you can go and have supper. You see what happens? You don't stay with and fully savour the present experience. You are always hurrying on to or after the next thing... But if, and especially you find this on retreat, if you are fully absorbed in what is actually happening and enjoying it, then, when you wake up in the morning, well you enjoy waking up. Enjoy just lying there for a few minutes. Enjoy the sound of the bell. Enjoy the brushing of your teeth and washing your face in cold water. Enjoy walking down the stairs, enjoy the meditation. Enjoy your breakfast etcetera. Then a certain timeless quality will attach itself to the day. You won't be hankering after the passage of time or to get things over so that you can do something else. And in a way, you won't feel the passage of time. Time will be passing but you won't feel the passing in a negative sense that you usually do. Everything is happening but again in a sense, nothing is happening. I mean nothing is happening in the sense of timelessness. There is time but there is also timelessness. You experience both ... whereas very often we can't experience either...

Mike: that is probably quite a good test for a co-op, for the sort of work one is doing. The way one is working in a co-op rather ... that ... I mean that you know something is really wrong if

you are waiting for the work day to end.

S: Yes or waiting for the meditation to end. I mean this can be applied to life because sometimes young people are just in a hurry to grow up. Or if you are not careful you'll just be, during your working life, you'll just be thinking about your retirement ... well this is quite pitiable isn't it? When you are always thinking of the next stage, never actually enjoying that one that you are in. Very often the last thing that children want to be is children... So this is craving,, yes? This is really craving. Always wanting to hurry on to the next thing, the next item. the next stage. Which means you are not able to fully enjoy and experience and understand the one that you are in here and now.

v: Why are people always wanting to hurry on to the next stage? What are they craving after?

S: Well why do they do this? Well everybody does it to some extent. So why does one do it?

v: Alienation.

S: Alienation. Yes. That is indeed part of the answer. You are alienated [110] from the present experience. You don't really experience what you are supposed to be experiencing. So you think well maybe you'll experience the next thing. But of course the same thing happens over again. I mean that is the element of it...

v: Seems that being able to enjoy the present means you need to be in touch with positive emotions. Because the whole thing of living for the future is a mental projection. And it implies that that is where you are living.

S: Yes, and of course this is one of the features of our ... this is as it were, is not so much the negative aspect, but the negative potentiality of our self-awareness ... that we can as it were detach the awareness from the present situation and we can imagine other situations in the future And this if we aren't careful can lead on to quite serious alienation .. So the very faculty,that is to say self consciousness and self awareness, that contains the seed of our higher evolution and development also contains the seed of a sort of fall. Or at least of a very negative development in the form of alienation. I mean animals aren't alienated. Only human beings can be alienated.

v: And that is an intellectual faculty.

S: In a way yes. It is the faculty of abstraction.

v: So that needs to be in control?

S: It needs to be in control. You use it for the purpose for which it is useful and necessary. You don't let it get out of control or run away with itself or it will run away with you.

v: What is a positive occupation for that faculty?

S: Well for instance when you are planning or thinking things out, for the immediate future, or just trying to decide upon a course of action. But you don't indulge in a sort of conceptual fantasizing, say about the future to such an extent that you are cut off from the present ... I

mean, for instance, the human being is able to well fantasize and imagine and build up conceptual pictures quite unrelated to the present situation, in a Walter Mitty sort of way, just because you can stand apart from the present experience. And that is ... the positive side of that is that you are able to be aware of it. The negative side is that you are able to detach that awareness from the present situation. The fact that you can do the one means that you can also do the other...

Mike I think one of the tremendous strengths of long silent periods on retreat and on solitary retreats is that there is really no escape. You are thrown back more and more on to the present and on to oneself. And [111] the two that is probably one of the reasons people want to escape to escape from themselves.

S: Yes ... Well they want to escape from the non-experience of themselves. But they want in a way it is experience but it really is non-experience. They want to escape from the non-experience of themselves but they escape into in fact another non-experience of themselves. And so it goes on.

v: That kind of thing happens naturally when the situation you are in ... the immediate situation is either too painful or too boring or doesn't hold enough for your interest ... if you see what...

S: But then the solution is not just to escape mentally but to escape physically. I mean for instance supposing here on retreat you are constantly fantasizing about going to a disco. And having a good time there. Well if you just stay on the retreat and don't join in things and constantly fantasize about discos, that is quite negative. It increases alienation. If that is the situation you had better just leave the retreat and go and involve yourself in those things. At least then, you are back to square one in a positive sort of way.

v: You are where your fantasy is.

S: Yes, your awareness is where you actually are, is of where you actually are, and not divorced.

v: And of course the tendency if this is an established cycle the tendency is to follow that fantasy, so you go to a discotheque, and then you are fantasizing about a beach somewhere. So you go to the beach, and you are fantasizing about something else.

S: Yes, and in that case, if you realize that this is happening, you just have to stay where you are. And forcibly bring your attention back into the present ... and if you have got out of the habit of that, it might be quite difficult. Or if you have to ask yourself "Well what do I really want to do?" "Do I really want to be at the disco, even though I'm fantasizing about it? What do I really want to do?" You have to get into touch with that. Ask yourself that sort of question. And in the case of some people at least there is sort of layer upon layer of alienation. And it is difficult for them to know what they really want to do...

Anyway the verse says, "the disciple of the Fully Awakened One delights in the destruction of craving" The word for disciple is "savako" one who hears one who is receptive. Destruction of craving is tanhakkhaya, destruction or cessation of craving or trsna or thirst. And rato delight, this is quite a strong word. The disciple of the Fully awakened one delights in the

destruction of craving. Well owing to his non-alienated state, owing to the fact that he is experiencing, actually experiencing ...??. [112] One has to understand destruction of craving in the sense of destruction of pleasure. It is craving that is destroyed. I mean the fact that you enjoy even say the bliss of Nirvana doesn't mean that you cease to enjoy the pleasures of the senses... But you give them their right place. I mean even the Buddha presumably will enjoy his food. He'll be aware of the pleasurable sensations arising in dependence on the contact of the tongue with say curry for instance. The fact that he is at the same time so to speak enjoying the bliss of Nirvana will not preclude the possibility of his enjoying that pleasurable organic sensation.

v: Also when his body was racked with dysentery, he didn't allow it to affect his positivity.

S: Yes I mean it is stated that he did experience painful sensation, but his mind was not affected by that. And from time to time if he wished, if the pain became really severe, he was able to withdraw, so to speak into the dhyanas, into the higher dhyanas, where he was no longer conscious of the body and therefore no longer experienced the pain. He could do that just to give the body a rest... so that it could go on functioning a bit longer so that he could continue his work on the world a bit longer. If he hadn't done that perhaps the body could have died a little earlier.

v: Sorry but if he withdrew into the dhyanas then his body would still have been experiencing the disease. He just wouldn't have, his spiritual being, so to speak, wouldn't have been experiencing pain. So was he giving his body a rest?

S: Well this raises the whole question of the relationship between the mind and the body. The Buddha did say on one occasion that he does not say whether rupa and jiva, that is to say the body and vitality or life if you like are the same or are different. He left the connection between the two as, well you could say, in mystery. Or you could say, he refused to think or to speak in terms of an ultimate dualism. But if the physical body is undergoing suffering and if you are conscious of that, that seems to intensify the suffering even on the physical level. So if you stop the consciousness of the suffering, even though yes you are ill, yes you have that disease, the suffering that you experience, the strain therefore on the physical body is reduced at the same time. It is as though the fact that you are conscious of the suffering sets up a sort of extra tension, almost... I mean you find for instance in an organ, if for instance, you are suffering from an illness and you take some pain killer drug, maybe you sleep for a while, well when you wake up you feel even physically better even though the pain is still there to a great extent. You feel mentally better because the mind has not been overlaid by the suffering, but you feel physically better too.

[113]

v: Dhyana refreshes and invigorates as well, so that it could affect the holistic..

S: Yes and not merely that you are not experiencing the physical pain, but you are experiencing mental bliss and that sort of feeds back into the body and bodily experience.

v: Sort of as a tonic.

S: Sort of acts as a tonic, you could say that yes... but the connection between mind and body or body and vitality remains quite mysterious. We know that the one acts on the other but

there is not a sort of psycho-physical parallelism... I mean we know the mind can be affected by drugs. But also from a spiritual point of view at least, there is a sort of ultimate independence of mind, at least for the individual... In the last resort it is not affected by drugs if you are an individual. That is why it is said that Yogis in India can take any amount of LSD, they claim to be not affected by it at all, they say, well that is what we usually experience anyway... I'm not sure about that but anyway that is the principle.

v: I tend to feel that their sense perception would still be changed in terms of colour and stuff like that, but they wouldn't be thrown off balance by it... but that is speculation.

S: But you know the principle holds good though we have mentioned however pleasurable the experience, the mind is not affected by that. And even if there is a sort of pyrotechnic display as it were produced by LSD well the mind just calmly regards that and enjoys it but isn't carried away. And if even all sorts of horrific images come up, if that is at all possible, I mean just as in the death experience in the bardo, well the mind just contemplates. And that is nothing really to be afraid of. these are all phenomena of consciousness.

v: Did you ever take LSD?

S: Several people have been asking me this recently. I don't know why; I thought everybody knew about it actually because I wrote something about one experience that I had. So actually yes I did. twice in fact, some years ago...

v: Did you enjoy it?

S: Well yes, it was very pleasant indeed. Yes. Quite interesting.(laughter) In those days there were a lot of people who were taking drugs or thinking of taking drugs, this was the late sixties, and early seventies and they used to ask questions in classes, we used to have a question period after the meditation class and there were so many questions about drugs, I started [114] thinking that well I ought to have some experience of these things because I'm saying what I think about them from a Buddhist point of view but it could be better if I had some experience. And there were at two different times, two different people who particularly wanted that I should take with them, so I agreed and I, as I say I wrote about one of these experiences . When you come up to Padmaloka I can show you a copy perhaps I didn't write in any great detail but for, some reason or other I never got around to writing about the other experience which probably was the more interesting of the two... I mean most people in the West, this whole question of alienation is quite important. And getting back to one's own real experience and knowing what you feel.. Some people are actually convinced that they are happy, when really they are not. They don't feel happy, they are convinced that they feel happy, which is quite a different thing. You ask someone: "Are you happy?" "Oh yes of course I am, Yes I'm happy" Then some people say [morosely] "Yes I'm happy" laughter] And you know if you try to point that out, well they are not, they get quite annoyed... "What me? Sad? I'm not sad, Who said that I was sad?" Or even angrily: "Who said I'm getting angry? I'm not getting angry !!" or "No what you said didn't hurt me. Oh no not in the least. I didn't feel hurt" All that sort... people denying their own feelings or not even knowing what they have felt... they say: Well, I'm not in the least upset when it is pretty obvious that they are. Sometimes they know it but sometimes they don't.. Some times I say, "Sometimes I really do think that for a lot of people in the West, the most important thing, the first thing at least, that they have to do is to actually know, actually be in contact with their own real feelings, Know



what they feel...

v: Do you think it is best on the whole though to let sleeping dogs lie, in the sense that unless people are actually coming to us to...

S: What do you mean by "letting sleeping dogs lie"

v: Well an obvious thing is one's parents for example. Your mother might say, "oh yes, I'm happy" and she might... you could construct an argument to show her that she wasn't but it might be better on the whole...

S: No I think that would prove, unless one's mother was actually say coming along to the centre and meditating, that would be an unproductive argument. I think one should just leave it. But if someone is actually within the FWBO situation and practising meditation and clearly not quite in contact with their feelings, well one can sometimes gently point this out to them.. You know, suggest ways in which they could get back in contact with their feelings. So you have got something to work with. But in the [115] But you know in the case of people outside, even one's own relations, that isn't necessarily the case. So I think one cannot settle it by rational argument. People will just go on insisting that, yes they are happy or whatever it may be, and nothing that one can do, very likely will affect them. Not unless they themselves start thinking in terms of personal development and perhaps make the contact themselves with the Movement.

Mike: You sometimes run into the argument that ... it runs something along the lines of : "How can you say that someone is unhappy if he doesn't feel unhappy? What do you mean by "unhappiness", if the person isn't actually feeling that he is unhappy?"

\$: Well you can only say, "You don't look happy" Yes? If you are bent and bowed and your face is furrowed and you have got a sad expression in your eyes, well, the observer is surely justified in saying that you don't look happy. "Just look at yourself in the mirror! Do you think that you look a picture of happiness.?"

v: Well I think some people would say "Well I've just got a front on, that I've put on..."  
(laughter)

S: Well then you can say "Well I am not the world, I am just me, can't you show me your real happy self?"

v: But they are happy, they just don't show it, that's all. laughter]

S: Well you just have to catch them unawares, if that is really the case (laughter). I think quite seriously a lot of people don't know what happiness is. And they may genuinely think that they are happy when they are not actually suffering intense physical pain. If they haven't actually got a headache, if they are not worrying now about certain things, paying the bills, or if someone hasn't actually kicked them or they haven't actually just had a car accident, they take that as, that they are feeling happy. Because they have never experienced real happiness. So if you speak in terms of happiness they don't, they really know what you are talking about. You might just as well talk about Nirvana. I mean it is rather sad but that is probably the case.

Mike: That seems to come back in a way to what dukkha actually means, a sort of almost like an absence of any experience of happiness.

S: Yes, I mean the teachers of so called vipassana, that I mentioned, sometimes do say, well if you experience pain and suffering, well you have realized the truth of dukkha. whereas you haven't. I mean it is said that beings in the hell-space, they experience intense suffering. They've no insight into the truth of suffering. I mean that arises out of .. [116] when you see clearly that suffering is due to craving and when you eschew craving on that account and when you see the limitations of pleasure, you can have an experience, you can have insight into the truth of dukkha while experiencing pleasant sensations. Because you see their limitations clearly and you are not attached to the pleasant sensations. You do not experience craving and clinging. You have insight into the truth of dukkha then. So insight into the truth of suffering is quite different from the actual experience of suffering. Or rather distinct from it, quite distinct from it.

v: Some people think that the only way to realize the truth of suffering is to suffer.

S: Yes to make yourself suffer, but that isn't so at all. I mean someone can experience the truth of suffering having never really suffered in his life. And someone can have a really miserable life, a really sad unhappy life, but be no nearer to the realization of the truth of suffering... Sometimes if you have a lot of pain and suffering you just become more bitter and more hardened and more frustrated. and more resentful... Anyway any further points? We can't go on to the next verse, because this opens up the next five verses concerned with the important topic of refuge

v: Do you think you could say that inevitably insight into suffering would almost be the antithesis of suffering? It seems to me that it implies a view of the unconditional and a view of the Unconditioned is a very very refined experience of beauty.

S: Yes, yes, indeed of bliss and of pleasure... And I mean you could be having that experience of say, transcendental bliss at the same time that you were experiencing suffering through the physical sense organs. Not through the mind organ, no but through the physical sense organs.

v: So then in fact you could even be, or have piles say and sore teeth and flu and what not but you are still experiencing dhyana and pleasure

S: Yes sure, your mental state can still predominantly be blissful, even though you are experiencing all sorts of physical disabilities. Your mind will not be overloaded with them. not just because you are mindful, but because you have an independent source of happiness. I mean there are instances of people having been tortured even physically but remaining in a quite positive mental state and not affected by the torture. I mean this is quite extreme but such instances are quite well authenticated, not only in Buddhism but even in other traditions, ...like Milarepa when he was sick, when he had been poisoned at the end of his life. That is a well-known example.

[117]

v: Are the dhyanic states readily accessible to other disciples? I mean is it possible to say

S: Well yes, the dhyanic states are not directly related to the Unconditioned, one can

experience them without any insight and I mean in the Pali scriptures there are many references to people other than the Buddha and his disciples as experiencing the dhyanas. They are not the exclusive property, so to speak, of Buddhism, they are the result just of concentration

v: So is it likely that a Christian could experience dhyana?

S: Well yes, I mean regardless of one's religion or beliefs, you can experience the dhyanas, provided of course you practise concentration and so on. I mean in the Christian tradition there doesn't happen to be the sort of meditation tradition there is in Buddhism, so it does seem that not many Christians have experienced the dhyanic states. But there is nothing to preclude someone who had not gone for refuge experiencing dhyana states. They are essentially mundane. So Hindus definitely experience them because they do have meditation techniques, concentration techniques. But they have no means to develop insight. Hence these stories about the great Yogis, spending thousands of years in the Himalayas deep in meditation. and then the first nymph that comes along ... yes?, I mean they are seduced on the spot, according to these stories, Hindu stories, not Buddhist stories. so if they develop insight, how would that be possible? It is just because they develop mundane dhyanas and come down from them even after thousands of years, you can go right down again.

v: What about somebody like Ramanamaharishi or Yogananda or somebody like that, they seem to maintain very high dhyanic states even though...

S: there is no doubt that Ramanamaharishi maintained high dhyanic states. Whether there was also any insight of any kind, that is quite difficult to say. Because one rather depends upon one's own perception or ones tries to work it out from the conceptual formulations which that particular person gives out of his experience. Whether that is an experience of insight or not. About Ramanamaharishi, I am bit doubtful. I mean I rather doubt that there was any insight experience. In the case of Anandamayi, I'm quite sure that there wasn't any insight experience just because of her attitude towards people and accepting and even firmly believing in the caste system. which is quite incompatible with compassion, let us say. But one cannot preclude the possibility of some people outside the Buddhist tradition, as a result of their own spiritual efforts, having had a glimpse of vision of insight. One cannot preclude that, that is a possibility. But it would have been very very difficult for them, yes? Because there is no external [118] support. They'd have to be very very gifted individuals to attain that sort of glimpse, that sort of vision under unfavourable conditions and with many sort of micchaditthis influencing from outside all the time, which they would have to counteract. It is quite significant that many of the Christians saints, thought they might have been quite ecstatic, even contemplative, very very rarely questioned the dogmas of what we would regard as micchaditthis of the Church. Which suggests that there was no element of insight in their experience?

Mike : One gets the impression that the more these Christian mystics actually sort of dwelt in the dhyana states, the more heterodox they grew, and less, in a sense, even if they thought of themselves as true daughters or sons of the Church, their interpretation of the orthodox doctrines grew rather suspect, even without insight.

S: Well I think it is quite possible to dwell in dhyana states, say in a Christian environment, and not question the dogmas of the Church at all, because all you have experienced is dhyana

states. So from what basis will you question those dogma? You can question them only from a basis of insight.

Mike: I was just thinking that the dhyana states, in a sense would make them more truly human and just be and add to the contact between the humanity on the one hand and the absurdity of the Church's statements on the other

S: Yes. Again one must understand the sort of transience of the dhyanas and also the strength of the Church and its authority. Because there are examples of sincere contemplatives, monks, Christian monks, doubting the doctrines of the Church, but then they start thinking "this is the temptation of the devil. I am developing pride as a result of my meditative experience, the devil is tempting me to question the authority of the Church" This is the turn that very often it takes. The power of the Church is so strong that they would rather question their own experience then question the Church. You know the influence of the church? is very strong. Occasionally you find somebody just standing up and challenging it all, but not very often and only and, and very often the person who differs from the Church's views will maintain that he is an orthodox Christian, that he is not teaching heresy, that he has been misunderstood. He will assert that again and again. He will not say, "I disagree with the Church. The Church is wrong" It wasn't until Martin Luther came along that anybody said that. And it is said that Martin Luther even after his break with the Church sometimes used to have nightmares and sort of nervous breakdowns in which he thought "Maybe I was wrong", in questioning the Church and condemning it. It is not easy to break away from an authority that you have been brought up in. Martin Luther could only break with the Church, repudiate [119] the authority of the Church by taking his stand on the authority, the authority of the bible. Even Martin Luther did not repudiate the Church and the Pope on his own authority as it were, but on the authority of the bible, on the authority of the New Testament. He say that they were in conflict. So his problem was, well if they are in conflict what the gospel teaches and what the Church is teaching and doing well why follow . Most Christians ignored the conflict, but he couldn't ignore. In the end he had to say "Well if there is a conflict we must follow the New Testament, the Bible, if the Bible is right, then the Pope is wrong". Even that was a tremendous thing for a man to say in his day and age: that the Pope is wrong, the Church is wrong. And people used to come and say to him, sincere people : " look, Martin, you are an ordinary monk, even though you are quite talented, do you think that you are right and all those great doctors and teachers of the Church, those great mystics and theologians, the Pope and the Cardinals and the Archbishops and the bishops, do you think that they are all wrong and you are the only one who is right in the whole world? And being sincere he'd think, "Well how can I be right and everybody else be wrong?" But then again he'd think, "Well, I see it so clearly, they are wrong. So even if the Pope says that it is right, I cannot accept it, and especially since it conflicts with what the Bible says". So you know he underwent a tremendous struggle in this way. It is not easy for the individual even if he is an individual, to stand against the united authority of the group, his group, and to say it is wrong. It is very very difficult, we don't appreciate that. I mean we don't appreciate that how difficult it was for the Buddha from a human point of view, just to go against the caste system, and the authority of the Vedas. We don't appreciate how difficult it must have been for Martin Luther to repudiate the authority of the Church and the Pope, We can just laugh it off now: "Oh the Silly old Church, the silly old Pope!" But it was no laughing matter in those days for Martin Luther. It was an absolute wrench, because he really believed that he risked damnation. If he was wrong, if he made a mistake, he could be damned. He could go to hell forever, if he was wrong on those subjects. So it is not easy for the individual to go against the group, even

Martin Luther could only do it by bolstering himself up with the authority of the Bible, especially the New Testament. He says "If you can show me out of the Bible that I am wrong, then I will admit my mistake, but not by simply saying that this is what the Church has always taught.

So Martin Luther wasn't a mystic, but he was quite honest thinker up to a point...

v: It seems to me that in terms of Christian doctrine, it [120] it is unable to express Prajna. It would be like trying to feed 240 volts through a 12 volt wire, it would just burn out. If a person in the Church had experienced Prajna, they'd very quickly see that they were unable to express what they had experienced in terms of the doctrine. And therefore they would well, they would kick it, or throw it away.

S: they probably wouldn't be able to do anything at all, especially if they lived in Medieval times. They would just see that truth was, they would see that everybody was wrong. They would also see that there was nothing that they could do about it and they would keep quiet...

Mike: It is interesting because there were these Gnostic strands sort of permeating through Middle ages. It seems as if there were always people who had some sort of an inkling and that this tradition passed on...

S: Yes always people who say things a bit differently, though even they didn't necessarily see them insightfully. You are not necessarily right just because you differ from the Church. You can just be wrong in a different way ... Anyway lets leave it there for the day.

[121]

S: could someone read Verse 188:

"many people tormented by Fear resort for refuge to hills, woods, trees and shrines."

That's short isn't it? it is even shorter in Pali: In Pali the construction is different; in Pali it would be 'Many resort for refuge to hills, woods, groves, trees and shrines. Many men might feel tormented.' You get a definite feeling of actually being tormented by fear coming over at the end. All right, what is this fear by which people are tormented and on account of which they resort for refuge to hills woods groves trees and shrines?. What sort of refuge is meant here?

Mark Bowden: Does it refer to nature worship?

S: It refers to nature worship in various forms, as you still find going on in India, a holy hill, a sacred grove, a sacred tree, a shrine, Caitya is just a heap of stones or a little improvised shrine of some kind, and woodlands. Subsequently, in Buddhist terminology Caitya meant a stupa, but it's pre-Buddhistic usage is a mound or heap, very often of stones, which is a sort of object or at least focus of worship. One can imagine this nature worship, in a way it is a natural thing, a natural response. In this connection, I have another of my famous recollections (laughter) This time from New Zealand, my first visit to New Zealand I was taken to see the last remaining stretch of Kauri forest in North Western North Island. Perhaps you can visualize that? It is a stretch of magnificent rain forest, the trees are enormous, they are mainly Kauri trees, lots of ferns, just drip, drip, drip with water all the time, it is so hot

and so damp, so I remember that I was taken to see one particular tree, called -?-anyway it means "King of the forest" and it really was the king of the forest, I forget how tall it was, it wasn't as tall as some red woods perhaps in the United States, but it was very very tall indeed and the trunk was the width of this room and what struck me was that this was the largest living thing that I had ever seen. It was bigger than a whale I think, and standing in front of it You had a very strange sort of feeling, standing in front of this enormous living thing and one could really imagine primitive man feeling even more vividly than we would that this enormous tree was alive and feeling some kind of inclination to worship it. I personally feel a great deal of sympathy with animism. I think it is a entirelyly natural and yes pagan response in the truly positive sense that you worship nature. But here this verse, one is not speaking, the Buddha is not speaking just in terms of Nature worship. He's speaking of people tormented by fear resorting for refuge to these natural objects. So what do you think is the difference [122] between as it were worshipping them and going for refuge to the tree. I don't mean going for shelter in a thunder storm. what is worshipping? What is animism? How do you feel when you worship the tree? What is happening?

Andy Friends: You salute something greater than yourself.

S: Greater than yourself perhaps in terms of bulk, in strength or swiftness or fierceness. But greater than yourself as a human being? That is a bit different isn't it? I think a large part of animism is a sort of empathy, an empathy with other natural things. I mean Chintamani was talking about Spring last night and in spring you can feel everything growing, you can feel the sap rising, something is happening in Nature that is happening in you as well, because it is happening in you, you can empathize with what is happening in Nature. So I think in the case of Animism the basic sentiment is that of feeling yourself alive, animated, you feel the life in other living things and if it is greater than you in some respect you as it were look up to that, you worship that, whether it is greater size, strength and so on. But subsequently, when you recognize yourself as a man, as a human being, as an individual, even though on a certain level you retain that feeling towards say the tree or rock or fire, at the same time you recognize that there are specifically human qualities which you possess which they do not possess, which formerly you projected on to them. So you end up, if you are a healthy human being who doesn't as it were throw away his paganism, you end up with the same feeling for nature, the same empathy, the same animistic sort of attitude but with something more than that. This is in fact what we find in the Pali Buddhist scriptures. The Pali Buddhist scriptures, some of them at least come very close to the actual conditions under which the Buddha actually taught and on so many pages of the Pali scriptures there are references to tree spirits, and fairy like creatures living in flowers as though the whole of nature is animated. That is the background of the Buddha's teaching, most of the historical Buddha's teaching was given not in cities but in parks and groves and forests and on mountain sides and in caves, so we mustn't forget that sort of background. It wasn't an urban industrial background, it wasn't even an agricultural background, very often it was the background of nature. You get as it were the murmur of Nature in the background all the time when the Buddha is speaking. I remember on the occasions of some of the early retreats at Keffolds which is not all that far from here, very often I'd be giving a talk, and it would be hot and the window would be open and through it one would hear the wind and the birds and the trees rustling and you got that on the tape. It really creates quite a beautiful background. In the case of the Buddha and his teaching, it was there all the time. While the Buddha was [123] teaching you would hear the trees rustling, the peacocks screaming, perhaps you would hear the lion roar in the distance. All the time the Buddha was teaching nature was there in the background. Buddhism never denied

nature. So animism is almost on a certain level an essential part of Buddhism. I mean some modern travellers going for instance to Burma in the early days couldn't understand how Buddhists could also be animists, they had this rigid idea that here is this religion Buddhism complete and separate and another religion animism and here are the Burmese at one time going for refuge to the Buddha and at another time worshipping the gnats, that is to say the Devas. So they were puzzled and they used to allege that the Burmese Buddhism was adulterated with animism or that Burmese Buddhism was inconsistent and sometimes worshipped the Buddha and sometimes the gnats. They didn't understand the situation at all. There is no incompatibility between Buddhism and animism. Animism is quite healthy. I sometimes say that in Britain we have more sacred rocks and trees and shrines and groves. Unfortunately we don't have these things any more. It is a great deficiency.

Clive Pomfret: When you say worship the gnats, worship the tree or whatever, what are you worshipping?

S: Well I'm using the word worship rather loosely. If we go back to what I originally said that when you are say in the presence of some natural object, a tree or even a rock which seems materially speaking superior to you in some respect you not only empathize you look up to it. So you may just leave it at that or you may concretize it, you may think in terms of you may feel in a spirit living in the tree or living in the rock, you may distinguish between the tree itself and the tree spirit and imagine the tree spirit inhabiting the tree. The tree is the house of the spirit. So you worship not so much the tree itself but the tree spirit.

That all seems to be a later, more sophisticated development, but your worship consists in sort of looking up to the tree or the tree spirit and even making offerings. You offer something there. Perhaps you tie a few twigs or arrange a few stones in front of the tree on a symmetrical form. At a much later stage you might even bring flowers, light incense or in some cultures you may even sacrifice animals. You may believe that that promotes the growth of the tree or whatever. So worship in these conditions, under this context is usually just the offering of something just because you feel that that object is in some way superior to you, maybe there is an element of fear that you want to placate it or to win it over to your side. Or the offering may be just a straightforward expression of your admiration of the tree, your respect for the tree. So you've got this nature worship, so this as I said is quite consistent with Buddhism. They really go together, just as Paganism and Buddhism do. [124] Not side by side, but the one is incorporated into the other. The greater and the lesser into the greater. So while Buddhism has nothing to say against Animism, not against you worshipping hill, woods, groves trees and shrines, it does take exception to going for refuge to them. Now what is the difference? What is the difference between just worshipping them and going for refuge?

Murray Wright: When you go for refuge to refuge that counts as the end in itself. In New Zealand there is a back to the land movement, they go to a commune, live in beautiful surroundings etc. and get back with their pagan roots etc. etc., but they don't go any further than that. It has become a refuge.

S: You take nature as your highest value. You expect from Nature what nature cannot give. I mean Blake makes this point Nature is a veil of the truth itself. So if you go for refuge to these natural objects expecting them to give you what they are unable to give you, if you expect them to solve the problems of life for you, then that is a terrible mistake. If you are in search for the Unconditioned, well Nature will not give you that. so Nature cannot be a

refuge. If you want to transcend the Conditioned then nature cannot help you to do that because Nature is conditioned. In the same way Buddhists don't believe that it is wrong to worship the Gods of the Round; they are more powerful beings existing on higher, more subtler planes. They can help you perhaps in worldly matters. They can give you good luck, they can give you wealth, success, prosperity, but they cannot help you on the path to Enlightenment. You do not take refuge in them, you do not go for refuge to them, You merely worship them.

Mike Sherke: In this case the worship is alike a natural healthy expression or recognition of superiority in some ways, but you are not making the great mistake of abrogating responsibility.

S: Yes in the same way you worship your parents in Buddhism. They use the same expression, but you don't go for Refuge to your parents, unless as individuals they happen to be enlightened. That is a different matter. Then you don't regard them as your parents, just as the Buddha made the distinction that you do not go for Refuge to him, if you consider him, as merely your kinsman or as a powerful and influential teacher who has to be propitiated. You do not go for refuge then, you merely worship.

Mike Sherke: In many ways that is like a distinction that the Buddha made when he was dying between the attitude that his true followers should take and his lay followers who merely worshipped him.

S: Yes, for them he was a cult figure, not a teacher. I think one has to [125] distinguish between the cult figure and the teacher, the cult figure and the Kalyana Mitra. The cult figure is worshipped much as you worship a great big tree or a great big stone, but if you try to go for refuge to the Cult figure then that is a great mistake. But the Buddha here speaks of [pagitalt?] Look up that word and see exactly what it means. The literal meaning is threatened or menaced, threatened or menaced by fear. So why should one be threatened or menaced? What is this fear? What is the nature of this fear on account of which you seek for Refuge?

v: Fear of Suffering, Insecurity, Fear of higher powers than yourself.

Murray Wright: Basically one's whole lifestyle, that believes in a separate entity and organizing one's life around that.

S: I think that one can say that there are two forms of fear, well to use well worn expressions a positive fear and a negative fear. I cannot help recalling here something that Subhuti said on some famous occasion some years ago, he is supposed to have said that, quite abruptly: "I've recently realized that women really are dangerous" (laughter) So dangerous means worthy-of fear. so there is a rational fear when you see quite objectively that something is dangerous and needs to be avoided, Tigers are dangerous lightning is dangerous, primitive man was very aware of all these sort of things, wolves, a big river, heavy rain and so on. So this positive healthy fear recognizing as dangerous things which really are dangerous. And then there is what one might say is the negative fear, neurotic fear which sees as dangerous things that are not dangerous at all. Some people are terrified of mice. Well is a mouse really dangerous to a human being? No, obviously not. So when you are afraid of a mouse and a mouse is an object of fear for you, well clearly your fear is a neurotic fear. So there is positive and neurotic fears. But one can subdivide the positive fear into two, the material positive fear, the natural



objective even necessary fear of those things that actually threaten life. You see them as threatening to life and dangerous to life and you feel the corresponding emotional fear. But one can go even further than that, Fear in an objective and healthy way, life itself, conditioned existence itself because you can see that conditioned existence itself as such is a cause or a source or a potential source of pain and suffering. So you have a objective healthy fear of conditioned existence itself you look for a Refuge from conditioned existence that you can look for only beyond Conditioned existence. If you look for a Refuge from Conditioned existence within Conditioned existence e.g. the hill or the grove that is completely futile. A conditioned thing cannot give you refuge from the Conditioned, [126] only the Unconditioned can give you refuge from the Conditioned. so therefore, the Buddha says, many people menaced by fear resort for refuge to hills, groves, trees and shrines . This refuge is not secure, he then goes on to say this is not supreme. Resorting to such a refuge one is not released from all sorrow. That makes it perfectly clear doesn't it? So why is this refuge not secure? I mean a big tree, even being something conditioned can be a refuge from a thunderstorm, but it cannot be a refuge from conditioned existence itself. The tree cannot take the place of the Transcendental, so it may be a refuge in a limited way, not refuge from say a storm, but the supreme refuge, the refuge from Conditioned existence itself. Therefore, the Buddha says, this refuge is not secure, this is not supreme. "Resorting to such a refuge one is not released from all sorrow." That is to say from the sorrow ultimately of Conditioned existence itself, a tree or a hill or an unenlightened human teacher cannot give you refuge from the conditioned itself, only the Unconditioned can do that.

Clive Pomfret: In a sense an unenlightened human teacher is just the same as a tree or...

S: Yes, you could say that. Or you could say ... I mean I'm not referring to unenlightened human teachers within say the tradition of Buddhism, who themselves go for refuge to the Buddha, I mean as it were the free lance teacher who has his own circle of followers and starts his own religion as it were, who is unenlightened. He is more dangerous than a tree. It is dangerous to worship such a one because the suggestion is that he can give you refuge, when he cannot. But in the case of the unenlightened Buddhist teacher, he directs you to the Buddha, he doesn't say take refuge in me, he says Take refuge in the Buddha. But the unenlightened freelance religious teacher says Take refuge in me. That is extremely dangerous if in fact he is not enlightened. You could worship him perhaps his superior strength, power, influence, charisma etc., but to go for refuge to him is a great mistake. Or to think that you can go for refuge to him.

Pete Shann: What about going for refuge to the Sangha?

S: Well within the context of the refuges traditionally, one goes for refuge to the Arya-Sangha, that is to say Stream entrants, Once-returners, Non-Returners, and Arhants, and from the Mahayana point of view, the great Bodhisattvas, that is to say the irreversible Bodhisattvas. One does not strictly speaking go for refuge to the sangha of bhikkhus except to the extent that the Sangha of bhikkhus corresponds with or to the Arya-Sangha. So with regards to those members of the Sangha who are not Arya-Sangha, strictly speaking one should not use the expression Going [127] For Refuge.

Mike Sherke: it seem that the problem really arises because one doesn't have a Buddhist background involved, a whole concept of Conditioned versus Unconditioned, Mundane versus Transcendental in that sense doesn't really exist, so it is as if one has no criteria.

S: Well this is what I found if you remember my memoirs in the case of Anandamayi the Hindu yogini who had this circle of devotees and disciples. I came to the conclusion after staying with her that she did not have any insight, as we would say, even though she had quite an extensive experience of the dhyanas and some supernormal powers. I was convinced of that, but as far as I could see she had no insight. And that manifested itself especially in the way that she supported the caste system, and social distinctions. But her followers were quite unable to

make that kind of distinction, she herself was probably unable to make that kind of distinction for lack of a Buddhist background. In Buddhism, that distinction is made very clearly and sharply especially in the Theravada, between the Conditioned and the Unconditioned. The spiritual life is seen as a progression from the Conditioned to The Unconditioned. Those are the terms that the Buddha sets forth the spiritual life in the Aryapariyesanasutta in the Majjhima-Nikaya on the basis of his own experience. He says in so many words "As a young man, being Conditioned, I sought after those things which were Conditioned, then I thought to myself, what if I were now, being myself Conditioned, to seek after the Unconditioned". You get the two things there very clearly. The Conditioned seeking after the Conditioned, that is the Wheel of Life. The Conditioned seeking after the Unconditioned that is the spiral path. So yes you can worship a tree, you can respect a tree, you can respect a powerful and influential teacher who is not enlightened, you can respect a rich man, you can respect a King, you can respect your parents, but you go for Refuge only to those that are Enlightened.

Pete Shann: It seems to me that within someone who has gone for Refuge there is a sort of Sangha element and I would say that you could go for refuge to that, in that person.

S: Well, there is this whole question of the fact that they reflect that, they are open to that; perhaps they haven't realized that, perhaps they don't embody it, but they in a sense reflect it. You see it in them, even though they themselves do not fully embody it. But strictly speaking, you don't go for Refuge in them as unenlightened, to the extent that they are not enlightened, to the extent that they don't reflect that, you do not go for refuge to them, you are just good friends with them. You respect [128] them, but you don't go for Refuge, you do not place your ultimate trust in them because how can you place your ultimate trust in anything except the Unconditioned.

Mike Sherke: You say that this distinction is made especially in the Theravada, but presumably it is not ignored in other teachings?

S: In the case of the Mahayana, if one isn't careful one sees the Mahayana as a sort of monism. The Mahayana maintains that both the Conditioned and the Unconditioned are Sunyata, so you've got one Ultimate Reality so to speak which is Sunyata. so everything is Sunyata, so it might not be a very helpful or useful thing at the beginning of your spiritual life to be told that everything is Sunyata, because then it isn't really necessary to give up anything, it is all sunyata. But in the case of the Theravada, it is quite impossible to make that mistake, because here is the Conditioned and there is the Unconditioned and the spiritual life consists in making the transition from the one to the other. That is a good practical basis, maybe when you have made the transition or you are well on your way you can start reflecting that Conditioned and Unconditioned are ultimately Sunyata. If you start thinking that too early on in your spiritual career, you may not make any progress at all. It is just a matter of words. I mean for you are Conditioned and Unconditioned non-dual? Of course they are not. Milarepa

dealt with that sort of thing: his disciples would say "even this stone is Sunyata", "Yes to me" and plunged his fist right into the stone, but can you do this? So of course they cannot, so for them a stone is a stone, is not Sunyata, the Conditioned is not Unconditioned for them, so they shouldn't pretend that it is. They should proceed on the basis that the conditioned is conditioned and the Unconditioned is unconditioned and that the Conditioned is here and that the Unconditioned is there, very, very remote in the distance, to be the achievement after a long time and after a lot of struggle. Not that it is all sunyata and here we are right now, nothing to realize, you know just wake up to the fact that you are Buddha. That is all so superficial though of course as statements, those statements are true, but not in everybody's mouth. We don't deny the truth of the statements, we only deny the right of certain people to make those statements. So that is why sometimes I say in the FWBO, in principle, we follow the Mahayana but in practice more often than not we are down to earth Theravada, so much so that the Theravadins probably wouldn't be able to recognize us as Theravadins (laughter). Far from being against the Theravadins, that is our main practical basis. But while we are on the subject, it has occurred to me that ... a few more words about these what I call free-lance unenlightened teachers. It has been a source of some puzzlement to me the followings that some of these people get. Think of someone like the.. was it Sung Loon, even people like Jim Jones, people like the [129] Maharishi, though he is not so bad, comparatively speaking, people like the Guru Maharaj, there are all sorts of people and even one has to add some Buddhist teachers too, not necessarily because they are unenlightened or because they -?- but on account of the attitude of some of their Western disciples towards them. One wonders what it is that drives or draws these people to these sort of teachers and figures, because very often they don't even teach, these figures in such numbers, so what sort of fear is that? The Buddha is speaking in terms of fear, "many people tormented by fear resort for Refuge to hills, woods, groves, shrines and these sorts of teachers. So why?

Mike Sherke: I think that probably the answer is the fear. It is blind it could be any fear.

S: And also in our Western religious tradition, we are not encouraged to discriminate, we are encouraged to believe, we are encouraged to have blind faith virtually. So if you lose your faith in Christianity, for any reason say, you are not very likely to become sort of rational and reasonable, You are much more likely to put your faith on to something that is even less tenable than Christianity, which is the strange thing It is though anybody with sufficient apparent confidence in himself, can gain a large following. and this is really quite a dangerous sort of thing. So the fear at the bottom of this must be very strong. So what is that fear? Is it a insecurity? The modern western world is a very, insecure place in every way. I think this is why these cults really flourish, people haven't got the fear of the conditioned in its fullness, they still want the conditioned, they don't want to go away from the Conditioned, but they are terrified by certain aspects of the Conditioned and they go to Refuge, for Refuge so to speak, or they seek Refuge in something Conditioned to deliver them from the Conditioned, but not into the Unconditioned, but into a more pleasant form of the Conditioned.

Clive Pomfret: They want the positive aspects of the Conditioned rather than the negative.

Bob Jones: This isn't particularly confined to our times is it?

S: Well. in most religions, using that term, people don't really go for Refuge to anything Unconditioned, Even in Buddhism on a popular level very often the Buddha is treated like a God. People do not go for Refuge from the Conditioned to the Buddha seen as something

Unconditioned. No. For many Buddhists he is like a god, and they do though they shouldn't so according to the Buddha's own teaching, pray to him for mundane things Sometimes that happens..

Bob Jones: You were referring to Going for refuge to any thing conditioned [130] as very dangerous...

S: Well, in the case of say, human teachers who are say unenlightened and who don't belong to a tradition of enlightenment, you are laying yourself wide open to exploitation. You are incorporated into what is essentially a power structure, and you can become sort of hooked on that, locked into it and unable to get out. If for instance you talk to people belonging to say the Moonies or Jehovah's Witnesses, you know how impenetrable they are, because the fear and insecurity is so strong in them, they have to keep up their defences and maintain their Faith at all costs. You cannot argue with them, you cannot reason with them, they are locked into this.

Bob Jones: Is there any way that you can say that that is worse than the average person in society with a nice job, a house and so on, do you think it is more dangerous to be a Moonie than...

S: I think it is more dangerous to others, yes I think it probably is. I won't be completely certain about that.

Clive Pomfret: In some ways people who haven't gone for Refuge to a rock, as It were, are still in a way open to the possibility..

S: That is true.

Bob Jones: Or else they never have got in contact with the fear, they are so blocked off from that. I would have thought that at least being in contact with the fear was at least a step in the right direction.

S: Well I would 't say that for instance that someone who is into the Moonies is necessarily in touch with his fear, his insecurity. It may be a completely blind and unconscious process. I mean he will not think in those terms at all I suspect, he will think I have found the truth, I've found the light. Not that I have gained relief from my fear and my sense of insecurity.

Bob Jones: Well perhaps this is a bit extreme, but with things like Rajneesh and

[End of side]

Mike Sherke: There's also this element of giving up the struggle, because Western life is not just insecure but it is a constant struggle, and if you say abandon Christianity, you become aware of that. I think that was really strong in the late sixties. It was really difficult, it was a challenge, and I got the feeling like one friend became a Fundamentalist Christian another one a Doctrinaire Maoist of the hardest sort from being a free thinking Anarchist. It was like they had given up the struggle. They had shut themselves off.

S: I have had a bit of an experience like that: I taught for a term at Yale and I remember one

of the students who took my course on Buddhism [131] and who was in some ways the most promising and certainly spent more time with me than anyone else and after I left Yale, he teamed up with a girl who was a Fundamentalist Christian and he went to Bible College and he is a sort of Fundamentalist Minister now. And a few years later, he started writing me letters trying to get me to see the light (laughter)

Mike Sherke: Do you think there is any danger of that in the Friends, that people, not say just people initially after they have come along, but becoming Friends and Mitras who are primarily looking for a sort of security and trying to abrogate a certain amount of responsibility...

S: Well, I think that is the case with a lot, but it is up to us, it is our very serious responsibility not to encourage that sort of tendency, If you are out front leading a class, even if you are an ordinary Order Member, sometimes you can see other people looking at you all starry-eyed, not to say glassy-eyed, and you have to discourage that, not in a sort of crude way, that sends them away all together, but just by your behaviour not playing up to that sort of thing and that is very important otherwise you start to become a sort of cult figure yourself and you start turning your class or your group into a little sort of cultic group. A little bit of this happened in the early days, but it was discouraged. These people had a tendency to hold classes of their own. I remember there was one Order Member who subsequently resigned was very keen on having his own Sunday afternoon class at Pundarika. He had 4/5 people coming along to that class, but after a while it was suggested that another Order Member supported him, but he resisted this very, very strongly and eventually it became obvious that he was building up a cultic group, he was the great guru to these four or five people and they were all looking up at him and were very starry eyed about him, but we insisted that a supporting Order Member was included in this group and when that happened, the group just dissolved after a few weeks, it couldn't stand the presence of that particular person who wasn't in any way starry-eyed. So one has to be on one's guard.

Bob Jones: I still don't see what you mean by dangerous in going For Refuge to someone who is not Unconditioned.

S: Well, I cannot imagine anything worse, for instance let me quote Nagarjuna; something like this, the teaching of Sunyata is the antidote to all delusions and all wrong views, but if you make the teaching of Sunyata itself into a wrong view, with what will you be delivered? In other words you close the door. If you go for Refuge or you think that you go for Refuge, but you are in fact going for Refuge to something that is not a Refuge well you are closing the door to any future development and what could be worse or more dangerous than that? You are in [132] a much worse condition than the ordinary person, who isn't going for refuge to any one. For him there is a possibility. But in the case of the vast majority of those people who take up with the Moonies or the Seventh Day Adventists or Divine Light mission cases they just are unapproachable and unarguable with, they are closed off and that is really a terrible thing. Anyway we went on to the second verse and in Pali the second verse is very emphatic:

'This refuge is not secure, not supreme, resorting to such a refuge one is not released from all sorrow.' In the Pali the not comes at the beginning of the line, this gives it more force. OK. verse 190 191:

"He who seek Refuge in the Buddha and his teaching and his community of monks he who sees with right knowledge the Four Noble Truths namely Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Transcending of Suffering and the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of Suffering, This is indeed the Refuge secure, this is the refuge supreme, seeking such refuge one is released from all suffering."

So here going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the true Refuges contrasted with the false Refuge. It is very important to understand here what the Buddha is really saying. It is not here a question of sectarianism, it is not a question of my group being better than his group. It is really a question of seeing the difference in the Unconditioned and the Conditioned, seeing the difference between the object or figure that represents the Conditioned and the object or figure that represents or embodies the Unconditioned, this is really the point, this is really the crux.

Pete Shann: What do you mean by the object or figure?

S: That is to say the Buddha or in the case of say Animism, the tree or the Nature god. They may be said to embody the Conditioned. The Buddha is not just making a sectarian claim, he is distinguishing between the Conditioned and the Unconditioned and he is pointing out the futility of going for Refuge to Conditioned and the necessity of going for Refuge to the Unconditioned. There is this expression here in the translation "the community of monks", the text only says Sangha, it leaves out Monks or bhikkhus. That is a little bit significant. In the Theravada, they take the Sangha to mean the bhikkhus, but actually the object of Refuge, according to the Theravada tradition itself is the Arya-Sangha and the Arya sangha can include those who are lay people, as it were, as well as those who are bhikkhus. In the Pali canon there are instances of lay people becoming Stream Entrants and therefore Aryas. As you know in [133] the FWBO, We don't go along with this hard and fast distinction between the monk and the layman in the purely socio-ecclesiastical sense I think that that sort of distinction has fallen down nowadays. Are you familiar with this sort of thinking? Well in the Theravada countries especially, a great deal of importance is attached to whether you are a Monk or whether you are a lay-man, bhikkhu or Upasaka. Upasaka being the more or less nominal household follower, being a Upasaka is not regarded very seriously in the Buddhist East, especially in the Theravada countries. the important thing is to be a bhikkhu, which means being ordained, wearing the robes, shaving the head and so on. But then in modern times one gets an anomalous situation, For instance this is the sort of example I normally give, a bhikkhu, all right he has been ordained, that is to say undergone the ceremony of ordination, but actually he has a job, He say teaches Pali in a local college and he has a salary and he has a house and he has a servant and he has a motor car. Technically, he is still a monk, and it is quite possible for that bhikkhu to be a thoroughly worldly person, who is not really interested in the Dharma or practising the Dharma or gaining Enlightenment, he is only interested in being a Professor of Pali and getting his Ph.D. and all the rest of it. There are such bhikkhus I've met quite a number of them. So in any true sense is he a bhikkhu? This the question I ask. Then in some Buddhist countries you have say an Upasaka, technically he is just an Upasaka, he just repeats the Refuges and the Five Precepts, but let's say, you actually find such people, he is unmarried, he leads a life of celibacy, he has no secular occupation, he spends all his time teaching meditation in a meditation centre, but technically he is a layman. If the bhikkhu who I described happens to meet laymen who I have described, the layman has to bow to him etc., etc. the bhikkhu considers it the duty of the layman to bow down to him. so according to me, the system has gone somewhat wrong. the layman, the Upasaka, is the

real bhikkhu and the bhikkhu who is the real Upasaka, perhaps he is not even an Upasaka. So to say that some people are bhikkhus and some people are upasakas in the Theravada countries nowadays means very little. So therefore in the FWBO, What we do is to emphasize the importance of the going for Refuge, genuinely going for Refuge. A bhikkhu perhaps has not really gone for Refuge at all. He has repeated the refuges, but he hasn't gone for Refuge. His whole way of life shows that, but technically he is a bhikkhu because he has got the ordination and he is wearing the robes, so he is looked up to and revered and so on. But the Upasaka even though he is really devoted had really gone for Refuge and he is leading a thoroughly Buddhist life, is not looked up to in the same way, even though he might have some respect as a meditation teacher, but not as much respect as a bhikkhu. even a bhikkhu of that sort. So it seems to me that under modern conditions this [134] whole distinction between the monk and layman sort of breaks down. So in the FWBO, in the old fashioned sense or rather the modern Theravada sense, our upasakas are neither bhikkhus nor upasakas, they are something different for which sooner or later we will have to find a new name. In India they are already agitating this, our Indian Order Members, they say Upasaka is not appropriate, because in India there are lots of people who call themselves upasakas that are just statistical Buddhists When they have to fill in the Census form, where they have to write religion, they write Buddhist and that is about all there is to it, but they call themselves upasakas. So our Order Members there are suggesting that we adopt another term and we have been thinking in terms of Dharmacari, which means simply one who practices the Dharma. But I'm not too happy with that because why not Buddhacari, or Sanghacari why just Dharmacari, it should be more like a three ratna cari, but anyway... So therefore with this translation of Community of monks, no you don't go for refuge to the community of monks, you go for refuge to the community of Aryas, whether they live as monks or as lay people so to speak it doesn't matter. In the old days, the days of the Buddha, there was a real distinction between the householder who lived at home and was devoted to the Buddha and the monk who had left home and lived in the forest who was more deeply devoted and who was in fact committed, then there was a real basis to this distinction but nowadays not. But the modern bhikkhu doesn't really give up anything. He is looked after for the rest of his life. It is a form of social security becoming a Buddhist monk, the layman may starve but the bhikkhus never will.

Bob Jones: Does it frustrate you ... for example Subhuti was telling me about when he went on the Peace Pagoda that he and Nagabodhi; were both relegated to the Lower tables and unable to talk to the dignitaries because they...

S: And I know some of these dignitaries, they are absolute rascals some of them. I've known some of them for years. There they are flaunting their yellow robes and I know exactly what they are like, and I've lived with some of them. Some of them are jolly rascals but still rascals, they are not monks. That is a joke, but there they are in the-yellow or purple robes and all the rest of it and people like Subhuti, who are a hundred times better Buddhists than they are, are relegated to...

Mike Sherke: It is almost like a sign of the true status of Subhuti and Nagabodhi the way you have described the situation in South-east Asia it sounds all too like much Christianity, that that sort of Buddhism is a religion in the worse sense that we know and have rejected. It is a religion in contrast to the spiritual life.

S: Well you know that after so many centuries things in this sense are almost bound to have declined. There is always some little difference between theory and practice, even in the FWBO, IN THE order, we have to admit that, but you don't change the whole basis of things just because of those little differences, but when the differences are as great as that and appearances depart from reality so far as that, then you just have to make some drastic changes. And this is why we have made some drastic changes in the FWBO. I mean going back to the roots and stressing the importance of the going for Refuge, whether you wear a yellow robe or a white robe or you call yourself a monk or a layman, those distinctions are nowadays with religious distinctions are more and more meaningless. But do you go for Refuge? That is the important question and are you trying to live in accordance with Your commitment to the Buddha, dharma and Sangha.? If you are, well yes that is what we call an Order Member. and for the time being an Upasaka. Perhaps we will end up calling them just Order members and not having anything in Pali or Sanskrit. And the Indian Order Members will just have to render that into Hindi and it will become a Hindi or Marathi word, just like railway station. (laughter) But this is if anything has frustrated me in the Course of my Buddhist life especially, this conflict of appearance and ... I went along with it for some years, though there were certain Buddhist monks who were out and out rascals, I had no respect for them whatever, but I used to show respect outwardly in the traditional way and I continued this more or less until my departure from India, that is twenty years; but in the end after a lot of thought I decided that well no this is not right. I am bolstering them up in that deception. I wasn't very happy about having to break tradition in that sort of way. I like to be in harmony with tradition, but the difference became too great for me to go along and there were too many instances of that sort of thing.

Mike Sherke: Do you think that this might have anything to do with what I picked up in my brief stay in India, that is a disbelief amongst the monks that it was actually possible to grow. There was one monk in particular, a lovely man, quite healthy in Sarnath who practically explicitly said, he had an incredible rationalization pointing to a picture of the Buddha and said look at the way the Buddha is sitting in meditation, we cannot try to meditate until we have learned to sit like this, which was the most perfect lotus, anatomically impossible. But he said there was no point in trying to meditate, and I wonder how much this sort of thing has to do with disbelief in growth.

S: Well you see the Theravada generally, officially nowadays especially in Ceylon believe that the age of Arhants has passed, they even have a date for it. The date of the death of the monk who they believe to have been [136] the last Arhant. I think that was in the thirteenth century. And they do believe that the development of insight and the attainment of Stream Entry is no longer possible and therefore they believe that all a Buddhist can do, even the monks apparently, is earn merit and pray to be reborn in the days of the Maitreya Buddha where you will be able to receive the teaching directly From the Buddha and make speedy spiritual progress. The coming of the so called modern Vipassana movement modified that to some extent, but they are producing so far as I can see not Arhants but pseudo-Arhants, pseudo-Stream-entrants by means of this pseudo vipassana. A friend of mine who I knew in India, a young man, went to Burma in the early days of this movement and returned with a certificate of Stream entry, which I saw up on his wall when I visited at him at home. And he had been awarded this certificate after a few weeks I think it was. Subsequently as a result of criticism they stopped issuing these certificates, some people say now that they never issued them at all, but I have seen one.



Bob Jones: Presumably when you were thinking about how to structure the FWBO you considered that we could have had more influence over the existing Buddhist world if we had played their game for example...

S: No I don't think we could. I thought about this. I think to play to their game as in a way I did myself for many years in India is to vitiate your own spiritual life. You have to go along with the in-authenticity. I think that is quite a bad thing to do. When I was a young monk, I felt quite uncomfortable about so many senior monks being around me sometimes whom I couldn't really look up to at all, whom I knew from my own experience were virtually out and out rogues. They were sometimes likeable just as rogues but feeling obliged on account of the tradition that I should show them respect, I think that this had quite an undesirable effect on me.

Bob Jones: I was thinking just more in terms in getting an audience, having people listen to you. If they are impressed by labels, they are not going to listen Upasaka Subhuti, for example, at a conference, whereas they might listen to...

S: I think this is ceasing to be true. That things are changing a little even in the so called Orthodox Buddhist East and Upasaka Subhuti would I think make some impression even in Ceylon. I think if anything more on bhikkhus than on lay people. Lay people are sometimes much more rigid in their attitude than the ecumenical. I have had private talks with some of the monks, they can be very open, but they are still trapped within the system. They don't feel in a position to do anything about it. For instance if you try to change any of the rules in Ceylon or in Burma at once the cry would go up you are pretending to be an Arhant, because they have got a belief which is based upon the Pali scriptures, that only [137] Arhants could modify the rules. They believe that Arhants because they were Arhants would never want to anyway. So if you want a modification of the rules, they take it to mean that you are setting yourself up as An Arhant, therefore you have broken one of the most important rules and you are not really a bhikkhu. so it is not so easy to work from within. So I think that if is quite enough that we operate from within Buddhism basing ourselves firmly on the three refuges and developing everything in accordance with that and I think that we shall be quite soon in a strong enough position to challenge even the entrenched pseudo Orthodoxy of Buddhism. People will always respect you if you are big and strong, that is one of the things I have discovered. People in the Buddhist world in Britain take much more notice of me now than they did 15 years ago, why? I have not changed really in any essential respect, what I was saying then I am saying now, but I have got bully boys like Subhuti and Nagabodhi who I can send along to make trouble (laughter) ... they are a little afraid now of our material size and strength, not that have really come around to my way of thinking, or that they are really more friendly, but they have come to recognize quite sensibly that we are a force to reckon with. But I don't deceive myself that they have come around to my point of view. Or if for any reason that the FWBO suddenly disappeared they would lose no time in kicking me down and jumping on me if they possibly could. It would be the same story all over again. Anyway enough of that.

Tea-break

...Order Member functioning together, there is a danger of lack of decisiveness, that is also possible. So there is no organizational solution as such. The solution is always to be found in the individual. No system can be perfect, but you can have the best possible and it can

function perfectly depending upon the way in which it is operated by the individuals concerned. So I have felt with regard to the present day set up in Theravada countries that that particular system couldn't really be operated properly even by genuine individuals, the presently existing system was defective. So we change the system, we change it by getting back, by getting nearer to the system as it was in the Buddha's own time, where you find upasakas even ticking off bhikkhus. That is not really the sort of thing that could happen in a Modern Theravada country.

Mike Sherke: Like Vimalakirti

S: Yes well that is of course in the context of a Mahayana sutra, you couldn't really compare that, it is from a very different point of view. But even in the Theravada Pali Scripture you find instances of upasakas taking bhikkhus to task. That would be very, very strongly frowned on in Theravada countries. The relationship is not direct and human, it is institutionalized "Oh you mustn't do things like that to him" [138] Well we even have had to scotch little things like that in the FWBO, for instance when a certain mitra addressed a chairman and the mitra was told oh you mustn't talk to him like that, he is a Chairman. So what? You must relate directly, person to person.

Clive Pomfret: I think that when that happens people say that you have got an authority projection

Mike Sherke: I thought that was being unreceptive (laughter)

S: One really has to beware of using these little bits of pseudo-psychological pseudo-psychoanalytical jargon just for rationalizations. I have been a little bit concerned lately about the glib sort of way in which people subject other people to an amateur psycho-analysis and then that is that, them all tied up: "Oh he has got a father problem, It is a possibility a partial explanation perhaps of certain aspects of his behaviour, but it is not seen in that sort of way, but he is labelled as someone with a father problem and that is that. I think that we have to be very careful especially this amateur psycho-analysis and talking about projections, and even relatively innocent expressions like "coming up", for instance so many people come to see me; and when I ask them how they are getting on, they say they have just been on solitary retreat, how did it go?? well quite a lot came up, and people are constantly talking about things coming up, you imagine them going on solitary and being sick all over the place (laughter) So what does really mean by using this jargon? Sometimes they say Oh I was really coming up against myself, well that is a bit more rational, but coming up doesn't really mean very much. It could mean that you were thinking about your childhood rather nostalgically and you suddenly realized that you hated your father, or that you suddenly became aware that you had certain sexual impulses and you hadn't realized it before. But this way of speaking is not very precise and another thing that I have noticed is that you get value judgements masquerading as factual statements. "He's very unreceptive" that is a value judgement. The facts of the matter are that you made such and such statement or gave expression to such and such opinion and he happened not to agree with you, that is the facts of the situation [inaudible] in value judgement. terms as he is very unreceptive so sometimes I get told this by this or that person that he is told he is very unreceptive, so I am not being given any information at all, the facts of the case are in fact being withheld from me and I am given a value judgement masquerading as a factual statement and I am expected to take that as a factual statement. So we have to be very careful of this sort of thing. So in the case of

authority projection, well again the facts of the case may well be that you went up to such and such person and you told him quite strongly and clearly how you felt about him but that is then reported as 'oh he has got a rather heavy authority [139] projection.

Murray Wright: In terms of being a mitra it can be quite frustrating sometimes, you go to talk to an Order member and there is a white kesa between you and him and so the only basis that you can talk to that person on is when you are down here and he is up there.

S: Well of course objectively one expects he is up there and you are down there, because what he is committed and you are not but this not to be as it were officially stated, when you meet you meet disregarding that, if in fact he is up there and you are down there it will emerge quite naturally in the course of the honest communication, you will naturally acknowledge it. You don't have to hit over the head with it to begin with. And also people have their ups and downs, you cannot label this person as superior and that person as inferior rigidly and for good. Some people have their up days and some their down days, so when you communicate with somebody today you may be high, light and positive and you may be as it were in the superior position and he recognized that, but come next week you may be down in the dumps and he may be in a very bright, positive state having just had a good meditation, come your communication there is a quite different sort of relationship. So it is very difficult to label anybody in a final sort of way as superior or inferior or more experienced or less experienced, even though yes on the whole some people have committed themselves and others haven't one shouldn't sort of use this as a sort a barrier to communication. You have to forget that I am an Order Member, I've got a kesa, forget everything like that, you know let's just talk, it will soon emerge whether you or he is more experienced or the more enlightened with regard to the particular topic that you discussing; on one occasion it may be you, on another it may be him, it changes some times. But maybe after a few years when you have had a number of exchanges you may each come to the conclusion that on the whole he is the more experienced person and I am the less, but you wouldn't usually come to that sort of conclusion until you have known all the ups and downs of one another over a period of some years, even then you might not be sure, because he might have had heavy downs and you might too and you have both had some pretty ecstatic ups and it is not easy to strike a balance.

v: You have to guard against this fixed idea.

S: The fixed idea, the sakayaditthi, it is a little like that, whereas it is really changing all the time, sometimes just cyclically, sometimes also spirally. This is one of my grumbles about the modern Theravada: a bhikkhu comes along and he expects you to relate to his yellow robe and treat him as a bhikkhu not as a human being, or at least that is the official attitude, some individual bhikkhus are not like that and if they [140] meet Westerners are only too happy to forget that they are bhikkhus and just communicate directly but there are in fact quite a number of such bhikkhus but they cannot do that in the East and bhikkhus like that when they come into contact with us are really happy to have contact.

Murray Wright: There was a Zen Monk from China or Japan who got invited to quite a social gathering and he went along in his rags and they turned him away at the door, so he went back taking his robes them on the seat and walked out.

S: Well, there is a lot that goes on both literally and metaphorically. I mean there no doubt occasions appropriate to dress up, but when you really get down to it those things can be

disregarded. In the Zen tradition itself when you are in the interview, as they call it, the with the Master anything goes, you can be rude as you like, pull his robe slap his face at your risk (laughter) but outside it is all bowing and formality and restraint robes and rank but inside in the course of the interview, that is all thrown out of the window, because it is recognized that a completely open, purely spiritual situation or encounter, that is the Zen tradition whether they live up to it, I don't know but it was the tradition until very recently. So that is quite appropriate, so when it is a question of the Order Member leading the puja, OK. the Order Member leads, that is a public occasion, he wears his kesa, OK. you repeat things after him, but if you are having a private talk that is completely different, you just meet quite apart from the fact that he is an Order Member. That situation is completely open, if it isn't then there is definitely something wrong and you are relating from respective hierarchical positions and not just from the fact that you are both human beings. So when one is engaged in this sort of direct spiritual encounter, well you have to just forget that you are a Friend, Mitra, Order Member etc. That may be relevant on certain other occasions, but it is not relevant then and you have not to think in terms of superiority and inferiority, even though that may in the end emerge eventually. If it does all right you can recognize it, but it is not made a presupposition or condition of the encounter itself.

Mike Scherke: Can one apply that in the sense of the metta bhavana where in theory as I understand it is an emotion that you generate to someone who is roughly on the same level in contrast to karuna or devotion. Does one take what emerges as emerged?

S: Well roughly on the same level when? you see? Well clearly, the Buddha is on a higher transcendental level, we don't try to direct metta towards the Buddha or similarly to the Bodhisattvas or to Milarepa, but that leaves us with a pretty good range, we could even direct metta to our chairmen. It is not inconsistent with their position. I mean if they are somewhat more advanced than the average mitra, well there is not all that much [141] difference. It is not that there is a difference like that between the Order Member and the Buddha. So I think metta towards anyone within the Order is quite appropriate even on the part of the "lowly" mitra. When you do become Order members you mustn't forget-the mitra's point of view. I have noticed that some Order members have forgotten rather quickly It is very easy to forget, to forget what it is like to come through that door and be confronted by several dozen completely strange people in a completely strange situation that you have not encountered before. So to be able to function properly in a Centre you need to be able to remember and to feel that, to empathize with that person, so don't forget.

Johnny Baker: It seems quite hard to identify that you were once like that.

Clive Pomfret: I can remember quite clearly but it seems a very long way away.

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End of tape

S: And after so many years of experience of such a different Buddhistic situation, so I think I can empathize more than many Order Members with the completely new person. I know what it is like outside, know what it is like in other Buddhist groups, also in many cases I have had longer experience of the world. I know more about what it is like outside; but, if you are young and you have not had much experience outside, you've had no contact with any Buddhist group before you came into contact with the FWBO, then for some years you live in

entirely within the FWBO, you can almost forget what it is to be outside, you can lose touch and then maybe somebody has been coming along for a few weeks and you suggest "Why not move into a Men's community?" and he is a bit doubtful and then you become quite impatient, "You've been coming along for weeks now, and you're not ready to move into a men's community, you're hanging back, he's blocking etc. etc." Whereas it is you have just lost contact with that situation and you don't realize that it is a tremendous leap for him to move into a men's community as you are suggesting, you don't have sufficient imagination. He might need two years of steady contact before he can seriously consider that possibility, two years to you is a hell of a long time and one must really place oneself in the position of that other person and with sometimes the best of intentions it is so easy to be impatient. "He's been around two years and he hasn't even asked for ordination"; that is not the way.

Clive Pomfret: On the one hand you can say that, be patient but if that way of doing things is so different to the way it happened to you ... I mean somebody said to me the other day that they had just moved into a community and this was after four years and I found that astonishing and I felt like saying "You silly idiot what have you been doing?"

S: Well sometimes some people feel less dukkha outside and there are all sorts of reasons, responsibilities of one kind or another, someone might have an aged mother that he cannot leave, it is not always just selfish reluctance, resistance to growth, it is not always that.

Murray Wright: There is that fact that we tend to relate to everyone who comes in through the door as being unintegrated twits, to exaggerate off course. but it may be that that person is in fact in a quite positive situation for themselves and may not be immediately attracted to...

S: I remember when I was staying at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, I had staying with me a young samanera an Englishman and he usually used to open the door when people rang the door, so it happened that one day he told me that a person who had newly been coming along had been talking to him and had said that "do you know when you opened the door, you were the first Buddhist I had ever seen" and this samanera said that he felt a tremendous responsibility when opening the door that "I might [143] be the first Buddhist that someone has ever seen". So this will be a tremendously powerful impression. So I think this is something that we need to bear in mind, that someone comes along to the centre and is wandering around and you speak to them, very likely that is the first time a Buddhist has ever spoken to them, you may be a bit down and disgruntled, you might not like the look of that person, you might think "what are they wandering in here for?" you might say "Come to the class?" "well, yes, yes" "Oh, it's in there", that is perhaps their first impression of a Buddhist, maybe an Order member, who knows? So you really have to be, not on your guard, but you have to be aware and mindful. And sometimes it makes a tremendous impression on people if you say "Come in, would you like some tea? Have you come for a meditation class, do you know anything about meditation?", just in a friendly, natural way, Just that can make a tremendous difference. I had another experience when I was at the Hampstead Vihara: Sundays was the bane of my life, because I gave my lecture in the evening, to prepare a lecture was nothing but there would be dozens and dozens of phone calls while I was preparing my lecture and I was usually the only person on the premises but I would say. "Yes, the lecture is at 7 o'clock as usual, yes it is upstairs, I'm speaking, yes I'm speaking on the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, yes thank you Mrs Smith" so I had dozens and dozens of these calls, usually women wanting to reassure themselves that there was a lecture and I was going to speak. Anyway I used to be quite patient, (laughter) I haven't got over that, and one

day a woman came up to me and said afterwards "Oh, thank you for answering the phone so nicely this afternoon". I thought "that's odd", and I discussed it with friends and I got the impression that usually when you rang up anywhere, you were answered rather rudely. So this really surprised me, so then I thought even the way you answer the phone ... and I have rung up Sukhavati and other Centres several times over the last few years and you get ding ... ding and then a voice says "Yes". And then I have to say "Is that Sukhavati?" "Yes?" and this literally what I have got. And then on one occasion I rang up and I heard a voice say "Happy Land" (laughter), so I had to ask "Is that Sukhavati" "Yes, is that Bhante?" (laughter) So when you are on the telephone you are dealing with the public, so you may be the first Buddhist that they have heard. Some people cannot even answer the phone properly. It is though there is some half-wit at the other end. I remember one occasion Kovida rang up Glasgow and there was a youngster on the other end who answered in such a stupid way that Kovida really ticked him off there and then, it could have been easily a member of the public. But people won't get a very good impression if you cannot even answer the phone in a decent and polite fashion, you don't have to be very formal, but you must be polite and friendly and clear. These are small things but they all make their impression.

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Clive Pomfret: When I first contacted the friends at the Manchester Centre, I spoke to Sagaramati and it was the most nicest, softest voice I'd ever heard. It definitely, then and there in the telephone box, I remember it ... it immediately started off a feeling.

Murray Wright: I think one of the things that first impressed me on my first night at the Friends in Auckland was Purna taking the cash out of the dana bowl and suggested that they go down the pub and spend the money (laughter)

S: But some other kind of person would have been shocked, so you have to bear in mind who might be looking and listening because new people have sometimes very large ears and they are picking up all the time. And since it is their first experience say in a Buddhist situation and they are quite unsure of themselves perhaps, everything registers very strongly and vividly. I can remember the first time that I went to a Buddhist Vihara in New Delhi and I remember very, very vividly the vihara. the green grass outside and the bhikkhus robe drying out on the grass and it was shut, there was nobody there, a bit significant I thought afterwards and I went away. I can remember the sun shining, the red sandstone of the walls, the green grass and the orange robes and the banana trees. It was like it was a few days ago. So when you meet people it can be even more vivid than that. You rarely forget those impressions and they determine sometimes the whole of your subsequent attitude. So one must be really alert, I won't say on one's guard, but you must be really open and positive when encountering new people. When you are around the Centre and you regard it just as a chore and don't feel like meeting people, well just stay away in your room and meditate. Do a bit of metta bhavana and then come down. Resist the temptation to just talk business with the friends that you meet there, ignoring newcomers or relatively new people. You are there for their benefit, especially if you are an Order Member or long standing mitra.

Clive Pomfret: I have found it extremely difficult with new people to appreciate how they must be seeing things. "There is an enormous gap, you just don't realize the extent that they just don't know anything.

Mike Sherke: There is that but at the same time I have also experienced quite often a

complete newcomer who has at the same time has some quality that I want to develop and he has it much more so than I have and at the same time he is in total ignorance of something.

Clive Pomfret: But the trouble is that you haven't got the basis of communication that you have in the Friends...

S: The jargon.

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Pete Shann: Language can be a barrier

S: Yes you mustn't ask him "have you done much sitting?" What about your practice?" Practice of what, he might be a carpenter, he might think that you are talking about that.

Andy Friends: I think there is a danger of it being too one sided, there is this person and I have a lot to give him. Whereas in the spirit of friendship you should just approach him

S: It really means that you have to enter upon any communication without any presuppositions, that is what is meant by the communication being open. You don't enter into communication on the basis that you know it all and he doesn't and you are very positive and he isn't or he is very positive and you aren't. you are just quite open to whatever may develop in the course of the communication. You can sometimes have a very interesting discussion with a quite unpromising looking person, who looks very dull, but you find out that he has a very interesting job or he has been to very interesting place, but you wouldn't have thought it to have looked at him. Anyway lets get on to the final piece.

So: "He who seeks refuge in the Buddha, his teaching and his community, "sees with right knowledge sammappa. Not only with Wisdom but with one might say Perfect Wisdom. Clearly what the Mahayanists afterwards would have called Transcendental Wisdom. You probably remember that in the Pali there are three grades of panna: there is the sutamaya-panna the chintamaya-panna and bhavanamaya-panna. A very well known classification in Pali. Sutamaya-panna, this means the wisdom that comes by hearing or in modern times by reading. This is the wisdom or the knowledge or the understanding that comes just as a result of hearing somebody else's exposition or reading it. For instance if you read these verses of the Dhammapada, you read them and you understand them, so that understanding is called Sutamayapanna, And then there is Cintamaya-panna. This the wisdom, the knowledge or the understanding that arise as a result of your own independent thought and investigation. So the idea is that this is a somewhat higher more developed form of panna, that is to say that you have heard something, you have understood it, but you don't let it rest there, you turn it over in your mind you look at it from different points of view, you investigate it and you even develop your own independent approach to that particular topic. You make it entirely your own. You understand it on your own terms, you relate it to your own life as a result of your own independent reflection. This is cinta-maya-panna. For instance if you read these verses of the Dhammapada, you can understand them at once, but that is only the Sutamayapanna, the process of reflecting of them in your own mind may go on for years as a result of which you get a deeper and deeper [146] understanding. But you can always tell when someone say gives a lecture on the basis of just the first kind of Wisdom or on the basis of the second. the difference is very obvious. But then these is Bhavanamaya-panna. Bhavana literally means becoming or making to become, developing,

cultivating and it is the word for meditation. there is the samatha-Bhavana and vipassana-bhavana, the cultivation of calm and the cultivation of Insight. So the knowledge or wisdom or understanding that arises as a result of meditation, by this is understood Insight. That knowledge or wisdom which is actual transcendental insight. So the usual procedure is first of all you just hear a bit of the Dharma, then you reflect upon the Dharma, turn it over in your own mind, then you meditate upon it, that is to say meditate on it with a concentrated mind, as the result of that meditation on the Dharma with a concentrated mind, you develop Insight, you develop the third kind of wisdom. So it is this third kind of wisdom that the Buddha is referring to here. He says: He who seeks Refuge in the Buddha, in his teaching and his community, He who sees with right knowledge or perfect wisdom the four noble truths, in other words an intellectual understanding of the Four Noble Truths is not enough, there must be a realization of those Four Noble Truths. It is very easy to talk glibly about them, this is something I encountered in the East. Only too often one would see a really fat well fed corpulent bhikkhu standing up on the platform with a very self satisfied air and he would be saying What is the fundamental principle of Buddhism? Everything is suffering and clearly he didn't know what he was talking about, it was just words, he had had neither experience of suffering himself nor any insight into the truth of suffering. So just acquaintance with the words is not enough, there must be a deep insight into the Truth of suffering. That is a very very different thing. But what does it really mean, this insight into the truth of suffering. It is basically fundamentally a sort of heartfelt conviction, a sort of total conviction that nothing conditioned is really going to give you any happiness. Maybe you have had experience of some of these things, maybe not, but you are convinced that however much say sense pleasures you have it is never going to give you total satisfaction, you will always feel dissatisfied even though the pleasure might be very pleasant, but it is not going to totally satisfy you and you are convinced of this, whether it is wealth or fame whether it is intellectual knowledge, you are convinced that none of that is going to give you deep down lasting satisfaction. So therefore you are not really bothered with these things; if they come well all right, you do not mind enjoying them, you might enjoy a glass of wine, but you don't think that ultimate happiness is to be found in the bottom of the glass. You are convinced that true happiness is to be found in only the Unconditioned, so in that way you have perfect wisdom, you have an actual insight into the truth of dukkha and this of course affects your whole outlook, [147] your whole life, your whole way of life. for you there isn't that mad rush after conditioned things, you don't try to grab them, because you know that they cannot give you what you really want. You want perfect happiness surely? who doesn't? but you know that it is not going to be found there Yes some passing pleasure, yes you are not going to refuse that if you get the chance, but you are not going to run after it and you are not going to expect absolute happiness from that. So something of this sort is insight into the Truth of Suffering

Murray Wright: On Sunday, you discussed Dhyana, and that as your dhyana gets more refined it gets very difficult to tell whether it is prajna or dhyana and used the analogy of the glass window. I was just wondering whether it was true to say that if it is prajna then it will have repercussions...

S: Oh yes indeed, permanent repercussions. I mean when you are dwelling in the dhyana state there may be similar repercussions but when you emerge from that state that won't be the case at all but if you have developed vipassana they will be there whether you have dhyanic experience or not.



Murray Wright: So it is like a seed that continues to grow.?

S: Yes

Clive Pomfret: With this cinta-maya-panna, I don't formally reflect but over a period of time things do get clearer, is the process of reflection in a way a natural process?

S: I think it is. It is a natural process given that you are interested in that particular subject to begin with. I think if you are interested in it you won't be satisfied with merely hearing or reading and understanding as it were superficially. Because you are interested you retain that in your mind and you will be thinking about it. You don't have to take a conscious resolution to think about this in the next ten minutes, though some people can do that. But if you are interested you will sort of brood over it, turn it over in your mind, think about it from time to time and it will keep coming back to you and in that way you will develop your understanding. One doesn't have to have sort of thinking sessions, like one has meditation sessions.

Clive Pomfret: You are suggesting that reflection there is conscious, you definitely know that you are reflecting on something.

S: Well usually you do, even though you haven't set a period for that, usually you know that you are reflecting and you know what you are thinking about. Otherwise it means that thoughts are just drifting through your mind and that mindfulness is not there and without certain degrees of mindfulness and concentration you cannot really think. But you can develop a capacity [148] to think when you want to. I find in the course of so many years I have read quite a lot about the Dharma and also other things and sometimes I am too busy to think about what I have read, but then I say to myself, "all right, in a few weeks time when I have a free afternoon, I am going to think about that and I do and I set aside that afternoon and I think about it. I can do this, but I think this requires a bit of practice. Usually you have to take advantage of the times when you feel like thinking about some things.

Murray Wright: would it be all right in meditation?

S: Yes providing that You are thinking in a constructive sort of way and not just indulging in wandering thoughts. When I was staying in Kalimpong at the Vihara, I used to spend quite a lot of time just walking up and down on the veranda, just reflecting on what I had read, or things I had heard. Some people find it easier to reflect when they are engaged in something, some simple activity like that, walking up and down, others find it easier to reflect when they are just sitting down somewhere maybe even lying down but then there is an obvious danger. Writing does help to concentrate too. So you see the progression from the purely passive understanding to the active understanding to the transcendental understanding and it is this transcendental understanding of or insight into the Truth of Dukkha that one needs to have in order to effect that transformation of one's being which is necessary to develop spiritually at all.

Andy Friends: Isn't the difference between the second and third kinds of wisdom a qualitative difference because you can just turn over things in your mind and it might not change the way you act?

S: Well some times you can decide to change on a purely rational basis. But I think that might not be quite so easy because when you really have an insight there is a change in the whole being and your unconscious energies are involved, whereas if you decide to make a change as a result of a rational decision, then those unconscious energies may not go along with that. I think it is sometimes quite difficult to see where the one ends and the other begins, that is why it is difficult to say whether it is a completely qualitative difference or just a quantitative one. But if it is a quantitative one that eventually amounts to a qualitative one.

Murray Wright: So the difference between the cinta-maya-panna and bhavana-maya-panna is quite subtle?

a: Well it sometimes may be quite dramatic and sort of violent, You see the light and there is a big change. But on a number of occasions, it may be a series of little steps which eventually might amount to something quite big. But just as it is very difficult to see the difference between the [149] citta-vimmutti and the panna-vimmutti, it is difficult sometimes to see the difference really deep concentrated thinking and insight.[Inaudible] ... an element of symbolism, but I think the point is being made rightly or wrongly that once Stream Entry is attained the momentum begins which increases and can only increase, whether it is seven or nine or whatever lives remain to you.

Clive Pomfret: But it is said that you can gain enlightenment within this life which is before Stream Entry presumably and therefore there would possibly be no further lives?

S: Oh yes, when it is said that the Stream Entrant would gain enlightenment within not more than 7 lives it is the emphasis on "not more than", not that now that he has seven lives left and within a series of seven only he will become an Arhant. No that is not the meaning, but not more than seven lives remain, he can speed up the whole process by making an active effort, but even if he makes no further effort, so to speak, yes within seven life-times he will become an Arhant this is the Theravada tradition, though rightly or wrongly metaphorically taken or literally.

Murray Wright: One in whom the Bodhicitta has arisen?

S: Ah well this raises a much more difficult question. With regards to one in whom the Bodhicitta has arisen, according to the Mahayana tradition, yes it can subside, because there is a reversible Bodhisattva and irreversible Bodhisattva. You become irreversible only in the eighth bhumi. So up to that point there is always the danger that you will slip back, that the Bodhicitta will subside and you will devote yourself simply to your own enlightenment and seek to become an Arhant, which the Mahayana regards as a fall. How the attainment of Stream Entry this ties up with arising of the Bodhicitta is a quite a difficult question. I don't think it ever has been tied up successfully in a scholastic manner. I would prefer not to look at the arising of the Bodhicitta or the Bodhisattva ideal sort of very literalistically. I would prefer to see the arising of the Bodhicitta or Bodhisattva ideal as a sort of other dimension, the more outward going, other regarding dimension of the act of effective going for Refuge and Stream Entry. Because I don't look at the Stream Entry teaching in a narrowly later Hinayanistic sort of way. I don't regard it as really tending to Arhantship as conceived later on in the history of Buddhism as something narrow and individualistic. I see stream entry in the original sense as entering into the stream which leads to Enlightenment itself, not Just a narrow Hinayanistic Nirvana. So therefore I see the Bodhisattva's life as the development of

the Bodhicitta as the More positive or at least more positively expressed aspect of that same Process. I don't really regard there being two different ideals and two different paths even though it is [150] not easy to reconcile the Arhant Path and the Bodhisattva Path in detail. But I think broadly speaking they can be provided one bears in mind that the Hinayana as formulated and as looked on by the Mahayana doesn't really represent what the Buddha himself as in the Pali scriptures was talking about.

Murray Wright: So strictly speaking it is a contradiction in terms to be a Stream Entrant but to only want to go as far as a narrow Hinayanistic ideal.

S: Yes, if one thinks of stream entry in what seem to be the Buddha's original terms. In fact even this distinction of Stream Entrant, Once Returner and Non-Returner seems rather late Within the context of Pali literature. It seems as though very early in the Buddha's teaching career at least the Buddha spoke only in terms of going up-stream, becoming a (utamsota?) one who has gone up-stream which seems to corresponds to Stream Entrant and he didn't distinguish these later stages. So the important point seems to be to pass that transitional point where the pull of the Conditioned becomes weaker and the pull of the Unconditioned becomes stronger. That is really what the Path of Stream entry represents: It is the point of no return, the point at which the pull of the Unconditioned predominates or begins to predominate over the pull of the Conditioned. What happens after that or the details of what happens after that don't really matter, you have entered the stream, you will one day enter the Ocean, so to speak of Nirvana or Enlightenment or Supreme Enlightenment or whatever, call it Arhantship, call it Samma-sambuddhahood, call it the Dharmakaya, it doesn't really matter. You may pass through such and such stages according to the Hinayana, according to the Mahayana, it doesn't rally matter, the main thing is that you have entered the Stream, you are bound for the Ocean. this is all that the Buddha ever really said himself. All of the later Hinayana, Mahayana teachings on the subject are just elaborations. They are elaborations from different points of view. It may be difficult to reconcile them in detail, but that doesn't matter. You have to bear in mind the broad out-line of the process. This is a very difficult topic, especially for newcomers coming into Buddhism "Well should we follow the Arhant path, should we follow the Bodhisattva path. Do they overlap? Are they the same path? are they two different paths? Are they different stages of the same path? There is a lot of confusion for the beginner in Buddhism, who is reading a lot of Buddhist literature, Pali texts, Mahayana texts, some Japanese, but what I have said really covers I think this matter.

Clive Pomfret: So entry to the Stream corresponds to a degree of Insight?

S: Yes in Hinayana terms it must be sufficiently powerful to snap the first three fetters, you the enter the stream. What I have called recently the fetters of habit, of superficiality and of vagueness in my last lecture on [151] "A Taste of Freedom". So it isn't easy to answer when people question you whether in the FWBO we follow the Hinayana or Mahayana or Vajrayana paths, in a sense we follow all and in a sense we don't follow any. We just say that we are Buddhists and that really seems quite enough. And we certainly take elements from all the schools, whatever we find it useful and helps to clarify the Dharma and help us in our spiritual development. And we freely criticize what seem to be later accretions and wanderings from the true path whenever we encounter them. All right: Suffering, the cause of Suffering, Insight into the Cause of Suffering, what is the Cause of Suffering?

Murray Wright: Craving

S: Yes, Tanha or thirst, craving. Is all the Suffering that you experience a result of, a direct result of your individual craving in this or previous lives? And if not what are the exceptions?

Murray Wright: I cannot remember the exact categories, but there is just accidental, just the biological functioning say an influenza virus.

5: But the fact that you have a body subjected to these things, is that a result of Karma, is that a result of thirst of craving?

Murray: it seems to me that not all of it is

S: So which bit is and which bit isn't? Or if the fact that you have come into this world as a human being, if it is not entirely due to Karma what are the other factors to which it is due?

Murray: Well your father and mother, form and matter...

S: Well those are the conditions which co-operated to produce the phenomenon known as you, but what has caused you to have those particular parents rather than any others?

Clive: A desire to exist both through craving and through positive desire to grow. Existence means that you have the medium in which to grow, the world is some tangible medium in which you can achieve growth.

S: This is possible, but this is said to occur only in the case of those who are quite highly advanced Bodhisattvas, that they deliberately take birth for a particular purpose, but ordinary people no. Ordinary people, so it is said only take birth as a result of craving and select their parents,

as depicted in the Tibetan Book of the Dead...

[End of side]

...of your own individual karma so to speak in the past. So therefore the fact that you are born with that human body, the fact that that human body is subject to disease is the indirect result of Karma but not the direct result. this is why I use the word Direct, so all the suffering that you experience in this life through your physical body is not the direct result of your individual karma; for instance, you catch a cold, the reason [152] for this is not in some previous life that you caused somebody else to catch a cold, the reason is that you have a psycho-physical organism, the body, that, but the fact you have a body is due to karma, so everything that you experience in the way of suffering is not directly due to karma but indirectly it is in as much as that it is karma that has given you the body at all. This is the standard teaching, but the Mahayana does introduce, even the Theravada to an extent, that there are beings, spiritually developed or transcendental beings who can enter into human birth deliberately, not as the result of karma, but as the result of compassion. So in their case it is rather different.

Clive Pomfret: Is there a possibility of elements of both? Some definite elements which are committed to growth and some elements which are caught up with the conditioned?

S: well this really depends upon one's overall philosophical position as it were, the Theravada would definitely say No. The Theravada is rather strict about this, that apart from the exceptions I mentioned which are very, very rare one comes into human life as a result of craving. They don't see positive motivation for coming into birth. Some schools of the Mahayana might see it differently because they don't have that rigid demarcation between the conditioned and the Unconditioned, for instance in the "Awakening of faith in the Mahayana" it is said that just as the conditioned is as it were perfumed by the Unconditioned, the Unconditioned is perfumed by the conditioned. There is a sort of interaction between them. So in the same way you get an interaction between them in a human being. In the human being, Conditioned and unconditioned are both present and interact. So when you are reborn it is not from this point of view, which is one particular Mahayana point of view. It is not that one is seeking rebirth only on account of the conditioned elements, but also on account of the unconditioned elements, because it is through birth as human beings that you can gain Enlightenment. That would be the point of view of at least one form of the Mahayana, but it is not the Theravada point of view by any means.

Murray: In practice, rather than say for example going into the bardo states and making a conscious decision to take rebirth as a human being out of compassion, it would be that way or that it is just that having become so imbued as it were, becoming an embodiment of the Bodhisattva ideal, it just happens naturally...

S: Yes, one should not literalize that whole conception. I mean the Bodhisattva develops a certain momentum, he develops a certain affinity for the world, compassion. This, as it were, to use a not very appropriate word automatically will bring him back into the world, he won't have to think sort of on the threshold of a new life being in the Bardo and make a [153] sort of conscious decision. In a way it is too late, he's made his decision long ago. Just as when you jump over a cliff, it is too late to think any more about it, the Bodhisattva has already jumped over the cliff during his life, all his thoughts and emotions have tended to help people or to be with people, so that motivation that momentum will continue right through the Bardo, he won't have to think about it consciously just before the moment of actual rebirth, or rather re-conception.

Mike Sherke: How does this link up with the idea that if you get a lot of merit you can be reborn into a deva realm but it is not as beneficial as being reborn as a human if you want to strive for enlightenment. It is as if somehow there must be a sort of conscious decision not to invest all your merit in a deva realm?

S: Well you might ... the standard Buddhist view is both Theravada and Mahayana if you just give alms to support the bhikkhus, you observe the precepts and you practise some meditation well then you may be reborn among the gods but if have done those things with the idea of spiritual development, not heavenly rebirth well back to earth you will come because that is where you are more likely to be able to continue the process of spiritual development. It depends upon your basic motivation. This is why in the Mahayana after performing a meritorious deed, creating punya, you make the declaration, as one does at the end of the seven fold Puja, that "I dedicate the merit which I may derive from this skilful action to the cause of Universal Enlightenment, that is to say "May it not help me to be reborn amongst the devas, May it not help me just to gain Arhantship for myself, may it help gain Enlightenment for the benefit of all beings". So if you perform meritorious deeds with the aspiration to go to heaven, then go to heaven you will, but if you perform them with the aspiration to develop

spiritually, well back to earth you will come at least. We were talking about the beginners a little while ago, I think one of the most difficult things when dealing with beginners, something to bear in mind all the time, is that the beginner can be very literal minded and will ask questions on the basis of a very literal understanding of what he or she has read. And that makes it very difficult for you to answer because you have to do justice to the question on the literal level but at the same time you have to communicate something of the spirit of the Dharma.

Bob Jones: Something I have wondered is why the Buddha didn't get reborn out of compassion into the world?

S: Well if the Buddha didn't get reborn into the world, what happens to him?

Bob Jones: But more in context of the Bodhisattva ideal, if he has so much compassion for the world, wouldn't he want to come back as soon as possible?

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S: Well the Mahayana answer to that would be "well how do you know that he hasn't?" Buddhas are around all over the cosmos, he might have gone off post haste to other world that needed his attention. That is the sort of theoretical answer that of course is not very satisfactory but maybe the question isn't very satisfactory either in a sense. Again it is this difference of school or different approaches of different schools: The Theravada doesn't of course teach the Bodhisattva ideal in the way that the Mahayana does, so for the Theravada it is not a question, it is only a question from the Mahayana point of view. So in a way it involves the reconciliation of the difference between the Theravada and the Mahayana approaches. The Theravada clearly says and this seems to be the view of the Buddha himself, so to speak, that on the extinction of the physical body, the state of the Tathagata cannot be declared, it is one of the, you cannot say of him that he exists or that he does not exist or both or neither. Your question presupposes that he either exists but is indifferent after the death of his physical body to the welfare of the world or that he does not exist. both of those possibilities are excluded by the Theravada, he neither exists nor does not exist, nor both, nor neither. His state cannot be declared. All right so the Theravada doesn't really have to answer the question. The Theravada is in some ways very wise, it leaves unanswered those questions that cannot be answered. (laughter) The Mahayana tries to answer those questions which in fact cannot be answered directly. It does it entirely as a skilful means, some Mahayanists remember this, some Mahayanists forget it, and they get into difficulties philosophically speaking. So all right, you accept the Bodhisattva ideal, you accept that the Bodhisattva doesn't want to gain Enlightenment just for himself, he wants to come back again and again, well what about the Buddha? Well the Mahayana says that he only pretended to withdraw into Nirvana. That is what the White Lotus Sutra says, because had he remained on earth among his disciples they would have become dependant upon him, so he deliberately withdrew, he allowed the physical body to drop off, but do you imagine that having acted like that out of compassion that he is not active in some other way out of compassion, not on this earth because he has left behind his Dharma, left behind his Sangha, he has merely withdrawn his physical presence but he is certainly operative in other ways or in other levels. In fact he is preaching the White Lotus Sutra on a high spiritual plane all the time uninterruptedly. If you ascend into a high level of meditation, you can actually listen to that, this is what the Mahayana would say. You see, a somewhat different point of view. It doesn't really answer the question, but it clarifies the area within which the question arises. But if one wants to look

at it in a more down to earth way, well one mustn't imagine that the

Buddha after the physical body had passed away continuing to exist as an unchanged ego entity so that the question of his descending out of compassion [155] or not descending really arises at all. I mean if the Buddha has acted in a compassionate manner within his lifetime, he will not cease to act in that manner simply because the physical body has dropped off. He will continue to act in same manner assuming him to exist or speaking of him as existing only in a poetical way, but the modes in which he will do that, the physical body being absent are not really imaginable either.

Murray: So speaking poetically then you could almost say wherever the Bodhicitta manifests, say in terms of the FWBO, there the Buddha manifests.

S: Yes you could say that. I mean the Buddha himself says "He who sees the Dharma sees me," where the Dharma is the Buddha is. Or where the Sangha is, certainly where the Arya-Sangha is, there the Buddha is.

Mike Sherke: That also comes back to the true nature of the Buddha, even when he had a human body .

S: the Theravada ... apparently the Buddha himself was emphatic or is emphatic that ... well the Buddha says that even in his lifetime his nature cannot be really be fathomed, not to speak after the disappearance of the physical body. So if we say well why doesn't the Buddha do this or do that it really means that we are expecting the Buddha to behave in a determinate way according to our understanding. This is perhaps not really correct. But if during his lifetime the Buddha is compassionate, he surely will not Be uncompassionate after death, assuming that we can in a manner of speaking continue to speak of him poetically as existing after death. To the extent that he exists he will be compassionate, but to what extent he exists even before he dies it is not easy to say. I referred a few days ago to an argument I had which took place on the occasion of a meeting in Burma in 1952 at the World Fellowship of Buddhists between Dr Ambedkar and a friend of mine called Dr Irene Bastohudson[?] a rather, well she was a real old battle-axe, a Theosophist and would be Buddhist and all that (laughter). Ambedkar asserted in the course of discussion that the Buddha was dead, she asserted that the Buddha was alive and they had a real ding-dong battle about it. Is the Buddha alive or is he dead? In a way they were both right and both wrong. Ambedkar was right in the sense that the Buddhas physical body was no longer in this world, but he was wrong if for that reason he concluded that the Buddha who existed when the physical body was there no longer was there, no longer existed when the physical body was not there. Dr Hudson was right and wrong because she took the opposite view. She rightly perceived that the Buddha was not dead merely because his physical body was dead, but she wrongly thought he was not dead because his physical body was not there, that he was therefore alive. That is another of the possibilities that is excluded by the formula of the Theravada. They were both rather unversed in Buddhist thought I may say and adopted a naive [156] pseudo common sense approach to a rather subtle question. Dr Ambedkar had a very powerful mind but not a subtle mind, but Dr Hudson was just an obstinate old lady.

Bob Jones: Are the two traditions mutually exclusive?

S: In a way though if you take the different traditions, the Theravada and the Mahayana

traditions, in fact there are several Hinayana traditions and there are several Mahayana traditions, literally there are all sorts of irreconcilable contradictions on the intellectual level. You just have to see those intellectual differences within a much wider supra-intellectual purely spiritual context. The beginner doesn't allow you to do that, he wants a very literal question "who is right and who is wrong??", you cannot always give that. The beginner might want to know well was Ambedkar right or was Hudson? One of them must be right, he cannot be both alive and dead, but you cannot really answer the question in that sort of way. You cannot say Ambedkar was right, the Buddha's dead. This is what many Theravadins say the Buddha is dead, but that goes against their own scriptures, you cannot say with some Mahayanists that the Buddha is alive. Some naive Mahayanists like the popular follower of the Nichiren school, those that put up the pagodas they will say that the Buddha is alive, that is the opposite extreme, he is not dead nor is he alive, you cannot state the matter in those sort of terms.

Bob Jones: Is it legitimate for us to bounce from one tradition to another in order to ... according to the shade of the question?

S: I think we will have to do a quite a bit of bouncing as you put it until we have managed to integrate these different strands and develop our own, as it were, FWBO tradition. But whenever we refer back to Buddhist tradition generally, historically speaking, there will always be a bit of bouncing to occur, I don't think that we can avoid that. In a way it isn't a bad thing because it keeps us aware of the limitations of a purely intellectual approach, because we have to do justice to contradictory, sometimes contradictory, intellectual oppositions. We have to do justice to the fact that, yes in a sense the Buddha is dead and yes in a sense he is alive. So we cannot come to any position exclusively or finally.

Mike Sherke: Maybe it is a bit like modern chemistry which gives a series of models and you use the one that is useful at different times. In organic chemistry you will use a model that you know is wrong because it is in fact far more useful than the one that you think is right for working out your problems.

S: Well I am a little out of my depth here, but I believe that navigators still behave as though Newtonian physics was correct because for the purposes of navigation Newton is OK, and they can ignore Einstein.

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Bob Jones: I think that Newton is a special case within the theory of Relativity.

S: Well I am not sure about that, but I have seen or heard statements to the effect that in certain matters of detail he was actually wrong. But I am not prepared to argue about that because I don't know enough about Newtonian or modern physics. But it is not easy because you can operate like that in chemistry, but you cannot really operate like that when you are asked a straight question by a newcomer. You cannot say "well, this is true according to the Abhidharma, but of course the Abhidharma is not completely true, but anyway we base ourselves on that because that is the most useful", well that almost sounds like we are Jesuits if it's

useful it is true, which is not really what one is saying.



Mike Sherke: I was thinking of one specific case where it was a beginners introduction to chanting and was quite upset, well my aunt has quite Catholic upbringing and to say this is the figure of someone who is dead like that really hit home to her. It was not the same as say bowing down before a god figure, to someone who was supposed to be alive. How can I beg for something? It showed a contrast. Someone on the phone at the centre tried to pin me down for a definition on Enlightenment (laughter) I think he was looking for kindred spirits, enlightened people like him. I couldn't satisfy him with a definition.

S: So you can understand now that there is a sense in which beginners questions are very difficult to answer, not that the questions are intrinsically difficult but because of the ignorance of the beginner. Not lack of intelligence but lack of acquaintance with the whole context within which only the question Can be properly dealt with, I won't say even answered, but dealt with. Well the clever beginner will catch you!" Is the Buddha alive or dead?"How can you worship him if he is dead and you ask him to give you enlightenment, it is contradictory. If you say that he is alive because then they will say "If he is alive and you worship him, that is just the same as god".

Clive Pomfret: You could say that he is dead but you are worshipping his achievement and that you experience him as alive because of this achievement.

S: But then they might say well how can you worship his achievement, you can commemorate it, but you cannot actually worship it.

Clive: You can worship him as an embodiment of the achievement that you aspire to.

S: But that doesn't make him alive.

Mike: Maybe we should compose the devil's advocate handbook.

S: Well anyway there are no answers because you mustn't answer the [158] question, you must answer the person. So you cannot actually have a handbook of questions and answers. It is you answering him or her. You have to sense where that person is at, why they are asking this question what it means to them, what misunderstanding they have got to have asked that question, what lack of knowledge or understanding that has prompted them to ask that question. That is what you have to suss out even if it is only over the telephone. It is more difficult on the telephone because you cannot see his face which will of course tell you a lot, or should tell you a lot.

Clive: A lot of people separate themselves from their question completely so that if you try to probe a bit they say look are you going to answer my question, so you have to do that as well as see where they are coming from.

Mike: Nagabodhi did a brilliant answer in a beginners class, when someone was latching on to something about the dhyana states, talking about cows and pastures and equating their states with dhyana states etc. etc. and Nagabodhi paused and looked in just the right way at the person and said well do you really believe that? So he really answered the real question. (laughter)

S: But of course you have to have that presence of mind and of course that contact with the

person. You have to be able to see that that is not really a serious intellectual question but one that is really just a try-on Anyway perhaps we had better leave it there.

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End of tape

S: All right we're on v.191 and we have dealt with Suffering: "He who sees with right knowledge the Four Noble Truths, namely the cause of Suffering," I think that we dealt with the cause of suffering, which is tanha, thirst or craving. So we come on to this morning to the transcending of suffering which is: Usually of course the formula recounted elsewhere in the Pali Tipitaka and in modern expositions speaks of dukkha nirodha. It doesn't speak of dukkha (atikkama?) which is translated here as transcending. I will look in the dictionary and see how good that translation is. Let's just stay with nirodha for the moment, because that is the usual format of the third noble truth. Nirodha, what does Nirodha mean?

v: Extinction?

S: Yes, or maybe a bit more literally cessation. The cessation of suffering. And the word Nirodha is a quite important word in Pali and in fact in Theravada Buddhism and is considered to be equivalent to Nirvana. The cessation of all suffering is Nirvana. Or Nirvana is the cessation of all suffering. Now do you detect a certain possibility of misunderstanding here? If so, what is that?

Cieron: It could be understood as complete cessation.

S: Well it is complete cessation.

Pete Shann: That pleasure is Nirvana.

Mike: It may be misunderstood in a form of nihilism, that because one is using negative expression that it is a negative emotional content.

S: Well yes, but let's go back to this question of complete cessation. It is a complete cessation of everything conditioned because something can only cease if it has already arisen. So Nirvana is defined in the Theravada very often as the complete cessation of everything that has arisen because only that which had a beginning can have an end and usually the Theravada leaves it at that. Because the whole as it were ambience of the spiritual life, the attitude of people towards it and the implications of so many other teachings suggests something positive, inverted commas, beyond the cessation. The Theravada doesn't feel any need to dwell upon that too much. The Theravada could probably maintain that we are normally acquainted with the conditioned so what we have to do is to get beyond the conditioned, we have to bring about an entire cessation, subjectively of thirst or craving, objectively of mundane existence itself and what is left is, if anything is left after that, we shall see, so to speak. So the Theravada isn't very keen on speculating what it is that is left in a manner of speaking when everything mundane ceases. But clearly from other passages of the scriptures, there is an unconditioned reality as it were behind [160] though the Theravada doesn't use that expression, behind the Conditioned reality. But the Mahayana possibly aware of the dangers of interpreting nirodha as the whole truth about Nirvana goes into the as it were positive residuum in much greater detail. It speaks in terms of sunyata, it speaks in

terms of Mind or Consciousness, Absolute Mind, Absolute Consciousness the Alaya, the Dharmakaya, the Dharmadhatu, though admittedly the Mahayana in a way gets itself into philosophical difficulties if it starts taking its own speculations or its own philosophical formulations of the Unconditioned too literally. But it is as though you have to maintain a fine balance between the two. Not say so little about the as it were positive nature of the Unconditioned that you give the impression that there isn't a Unconditioned and that on the cessation of the Conditioned you are just left with blank and on the other hand not say so much about the Unconditioned that you turn it virtually into a more refined form of the Conditioned. That the Theravada tends to go to one extreme, the Mahayana tends to go to the other. You have to maintain a fine balance between the two, not give the impression with the cessation of craving there is just nothing left and at the same time not giving the impression that Nirvana is more refined of something mundane. Not give the impression with your mundane mind so to speak you can already understand quite fully and clearly exactly what the Unconditioned is or that it can be in fact adequately formulated in conceptual, rational terms. The term Nirvana by the way itself is grammatically negative, Nirvana the extinction, the negation of desire. But anyway this is in connection with Nirodha. We are talking about Dukkha Nirodha, which is the way in which the third truth is usually formulated, that cessation of Dukkha is considered synonymous with Nirvana. So the third truth is the truth of Nirvana or the Unconditioned, but the text uses the expression (atikkama), so I am going to look that up and see what it means ... Literally "going over or further, passing beyond, traversing, overcoming or overstepping ", so yes transcending. so that is interesting that just this one verse in the Dhammapada speaks of transcending Suffering rather than of the Cessation of Suffering. I think we have to remember that even though certain forms, certain wordings of the best known formulations are more familiar to you there are others Usually any elementary book on Buddhism, or the Theravada based on Pali sources will talk of Dukkha Nirodha, it will not speak of atikkama. But actually in the Dhammapada, the Buddha is using that expression: transcending Suffering. So for instance if you are taking a class or you are answering a question and somebody is asking about the third noble truth, you are not obliged to speak in terms of cessation of Suffering being the third noble truth, you can equally valuably speak of the Transcending of Suffering as being the third noble truth with full canonical support.

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Murray: It seems to me transcending or passing beyond is more accurate.

S: Because certainly while you are still alive you can transcend suffering without suffering actually having ceased as in the case of the Buddha. He had to endure a wound in the foot, he experienced pain, so there was no cessation of pain, but he had transcended pain, in the sense that his mind was unmoved or disturbed by the experience. All right and then the "Noble Eightfold Path"

Here it is the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering. Here the translator Buddhadatta translates it as cessation, but it is not really cessation, it is the calming down, the quieting of suffering, this upa-samma. So again another expression it is not Dukkha Nirodha, it is Dukkha pasana, the calming down of Suffering. Again a quite expressive way of putting it. So of course with the Eightfold path you are all quite familiar. So no need to go into that. But these are the Four Noble Truths of which one needs to have right Knowledge, a Perfect vision. Now there are two points to be made here. One is with regard to the distribution of the Four truths over the two processes and the other the meaning of Aryan or Noble. We've

spoken in terms of the reactive process and the creative process, how does that tie up with the Four Noble truths, I've actually spelt it out in the Survey. This is something that one should be very clear about.

Murray: The reactive process more or less is the first two truths and the creative process is the actual seeing of the Four truths, a seeing of the reactive process functioning and the transcending of the reactive process which is the last two noble truths.

S: In the case of dukkha, dukkha Nirodha or dukkha atikkama, you have got

cause first and effect last. In the sequence of the nidanas and the sequence of, we usually put the cause first and then the effect, but here in the Four Noble Truths we have the effect: suffering and then the cause: craving. You see the difference, but that shouldn't mislead us. Why do you think that in the former, of the truths the effect is put first?

Murray: Well it is like a common denominator of human experience.

S: Yes it is what you actually encounter, you encounter the suffering first then you start looking around for cause. So if your approach is empirical and pragmatic, you will put the effect first and the cause second, but if your approach is deductive and as it were philosophical, you will put the cause first and then effect, because in time actually the cause does come first and the effect afterwards. And when we speak of the reactive process we put the cause first and the effect afterwards.

Murray: So the Four truths are dealing with method whereas the other is [162] dealing with principle.

S: Yes and in the case of the second two truths, you've got also the effect followed by the cause, the effect so to speak, Nirvana, how do we reach Nirvana - by following the Eightfold Path. But if you are thinking in terms of the creative process, the spiral, well you must put the path first and the goal after the path. So actually the ... if you reverse the order from inductive to deductive the four Noble truths encapsulate and summarize the reactive process and the creative process. So in ... you could say that the first truths are concerned with the Round and the second with the Spiral path and the goal. This is why we have the whole of the dharma as it were encapsulated within this particular formula. Usually as it is presented and expounded the four Noble Truths come across as something quite dull, rigid but if they do come across in that way then one has not understood. One mustn't forget that these formulas just are aide-memoir in the days when there were no writings, no books, and they filled in the outline when they started talking about them.

Mike: In the Survey, when you are dealing with this if I remember correctly you stress the, it is as if you stress everything but the word dukkha in your discussion of the four Noble truths. In other words, this method of reasoning or presenting material you stress that this is the important part of it, in nothing else you have written that I have read have you done it that way.

S: Well, I think I was concerned to stress the general form of Conditionality first and to stress that it was universal principle and also to point out that in the scriptures, the Buddha doesn't only speak of Dukkha arising of dukkha and so on, the cessation of Dukkha and the way

leading to it, he speaks of a number of other things in those terms applying the same formula of conditionality, which suggest that it is a universal principle not simply a principle applicable to the experience of suffering. But its application to the experience of suffering is methodologically the most important and certainly for Buddhism historically its application is the most important. Because we are basically concerned with suffering, why we suffer and how we can be happy. I think that I point out the Buddha applies this to food, the cause of food, the cessation of food and the way leading to the cessation of food and so on. So first as I pointed out we see the general principle of conditionality then we see the two main prongs of that principle as it is embodied in the Round and the Spiral and exemplified or even reflected in the reactive mind and the creative mind and then we apply that in greater detail as a result of which application we get formulas like the four noble truths. So in my opinion one shouldn't just start off slowly with the four Noble truths [163] and say this what Buddhism teaches. First of all start off with an explanation of the general principle of Conditionality, that this is the fundamental principle, that is a middle way between eternalism and nihilism. One doesn't believe, as we saw the other day that either cause and effect are identical or that they are completely different, because in both those cases causation actually would be impossible. We believe in Conditionality that this being so, that arises, in dependence upon this that arises, in the absence of this, that no longer arises and we distinguish two modes of operation of this principle, the reactive and the Creative, then we go into the Round as the embodiment of the reactive and the spiral as the embodiment of the Creative, then we can deal with the Reactive mind and the Creative mind and so on. Don't plunge straight into the Four Noble Truths ... well you don't give a full explanation if you just explain the Four Truths by themselves. So then these Four Truths are called Noble or Aryan, what does that mean? Actually though it is translated Aryan Truths, that isn't quite correct. Aryan is here not an adjective but a substantive; They are the four Truths of the Aryans, how can a Truth which is abstract be noble or ignoble. Truth is just the Truth, but individuals can be either Aryan or Un-Aryans, so they are the Four Truths of the Aryans. So who are these Aryans? What does Aryan, mean in Sanskrit, what did it originally mean? Noble, yes and to whom was it applied? [mixed Voices] Yes it was originally a racial term, that the people invading India from the North West described themselves as Aryans or Nobles and the population of the country that they were invading they described as asyas[?] or slaves or servants. So originally it was a racial term as it was used again by Nazism the Aryan race, with connotations of superiority, but gradually it came to denote simply superiority, excellence and even virtue, noble qualities, it took on an ethical significance, You find this even within the Vedic literature. So it took on the meaning of noble in the ethical, cultural, moral and then Buddhism took it over and gave it more a meaning of what we would call a spiritual or even transcendental So those of the Buddha's followers who had actually achieved Stream Entry and so on came to be described more and more technically or in more and more technical terms as Aryas. This is why we have the Arya Sangha. Here it means the Sangha of those, or the community of these who are Stream entrants and so on, the spiritual community of those who have attained the Transcendental Path who have reached beyond the point of no return. SO this is what Arya means. So what about the Four Aryan Truths? The four truths of the Aryans? What does that mean?

Mike: The truths realized by those people on the Transcendental path.

S: the truth as seen by Aryans, the Truth as disclosed in or to the vision of the Aryas. You can only really see all conditioned things [164] as suffering really see if you are an Aryan. So the Four Noble Truths are a sort of presentation in a succinct form of the vision of the Aryans, the

Four noble Truths represent the way in which someone with Perfect vision sees existence. He sees all conditioned things as not Satisfactory, as not able to give ultimate satisfaction, in that sense he sees pleasure as pain, not that he doesn't experience pleasurable sensations but he sees quite clearly the limitations of that kind of pleasure. Usually this is not understood and it is not explained in books on Buddhism, you get the impression that the Four Noble Truths are so called because you just want to give a sort of honorific expression to the Four Truths out of reverence as it were. But it is not that at all. The Four Noble Truths are those truths as seen as by those that are Aryans, the way the Aryans see the world. It represents the content of their vision.

Murray: So this is their whole aspect of conditioned existence you get a view of something that is beautiful or more refined than the other that you thought were refined before becomes unrefined, and you begin to see it for what it is.

S: Yes you transcend, go beyond.

Mike: This actually seems an extremely serious mistake that is made because on the one hand it is an expression of the transcendental and the other hand the way it is usually portrayed, as you said the word noble is meaningless and it really is almost naturally quite a depressing formulation rather than anything to do with insight. It is as if there is a complete disregard for the fact that you need insight to really see this.

S: Well this is the source of that misunderstanding that the more you experience Dukkha the more insight you have into it which is not the case at all. you can be an Aryan, that is to say you can be a Stream Entrant and you can be surveying the whole of conditioned existence say in your meditation and seeing it as dukkha and at the same time your experience is intensely pleasurable and blissful. You are realizing the truth of Dukkha, your vision, your insight into the ... Conditioned things are conditioned, but you can still be experiencing by way of the dhyanas a blissful state. So the other hand you can have an intense experience of suffering but no insight into the Truth of Suffering whatever which is the case of most people. You could even say the more you have insight into the Truth of dukkha the less dukkha you will actually feel, or the less you will feel as dukkha whatever dukkha you are happening to experience and it can only be bodily anyway, the mere fact that that vision has arisen means that you cannot experience mental dukkha, except in the very very subtle way that supposing you are a stream entrant, stream entry is painful, inverted commas, in comparison with Arhantship, because it is a lesser degree of perfection. [165] So one has to be very careful, otherwise we really misinterpret this teaching. And it usually is misinterpreted. so this is all spelt out quite clearly in some of the early sections of the Survey, Ch. 1. no to go back to those verses, "he who seeks Refuge in the Buddha, in his teaching and his community, he who sees with right knowledge the Four Noble Truths, namely suffering, the Cause of Suffering, The Transcending of Suffering and the Noble Eight fold Path, which leads to the cessation of Suffering, this indeed is Refuge secure, this the Refuge Supreme. Seeking such Refuge one is released from all suffering." You notice that it is in a sense it is not just the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha which are the Refuge it is one's own vision, it is one's own insight into the Four Truths that also are the supreme Refuge. Its as though the only real Refuge is a Transcendental Refuge, you only really go for refuge, what I've called a Real going for Refuge when you become a stream Entrant. You may remember that I distinguished different degrees or levels of going for Refuge, the provisional, the effective, the real, and the ultimate or absolute.

Bob Jones: We were discussing going for refuge yesterday and you were talking about Dr Ambedkar and the Untouchables and the idea of mass conversion of 250,000 people going for refuge called certain things into question in a way; the personal nature of going for Refuge and the almost political nature of the decision.

S: The first point is for my own personal experience that most of the people who went for refuge didn't go for Refuge as individuals. It wasn't just an individual decision. They had faith in Dr Ambedkar, the whole community perhaps, the whole family went for Refuge, so they did too. This is not to say that they were not convinced, yes they were convinced; they really wanted to become Buddhists as they thought, leave Hinduism, adopt a better religion, this is how they saw it, but one cannot say that they went for refuge individually as we understand going for Refuge individually in the FWBO. And as it was originally understood in Buddhism, one cannot say that. So one can therefore say that their going for Refuge was a provisional going for Refuge. This is the first of my four or perhaps five levels of going for Refuge. I've also called it a cultural going for Refuge. In the sense that there are quite a lot of people in Buddhist countries who repeat the Refuges, who regard themselves as Buddhist, who belong to a Buddhist community, not Buddhist spiritual community and follow the local Buddhist culture. They have not gone for effective Refuge, which is what you go for in the FWBO when you receive the Upasaka ordination. They consider themselves as upasakas, but in my view they are not, not in the real original Buddhist sense or in the FWBO sense. At best they can be said to have gone for refuge provisionally, or Cultural refuge and [166] broadly speaking Friends and Mitras who just come along and join in the recitation of the Refuges and Precepts, theirs also is a provisional Refuge. It is expressive of devotion and a desire for involvement, not of actual commitment to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This comes about only with effective going for Refuge when you consciously realize that well yes you want to grow, you want to develop, that you want to commit yourself to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is effective going for Refuge.

It is called effective because you are actually acting upon it, you actively commit yourself, but you can fall back due to human weakness, gravitational pull, conditions and circumstances, you can fall back so even an effective going for Refuge is not a Real refuge, that only comes when you enter the Stream and can no longer fall back. Even then you still go for Refuge because there is still something beyond, the Unconditioned, the Buddha. But when you yourself become fully enlightened when you are your own Refuge, when the one who goes for refuge and that to which you go for Refuge are one then that is the Absolute, the Ultimate Refuge which only the Buddha himself so to speak takes. You see what I mean. So I place all born Buddhists, I place their going for Refuge in the category of provisional Refuge, those who are merely born Buddhists and in much the same way I place all the people who become in mass conversion ceremonies, going for refuge as it were collectively, I place the going for refuge in this provisional going for refuge category, even though they call themselves upasakas. So the mass of people who come along to us in India, these Ex-untouchables who have been converted to Buddhism as it were on mass, who come in their hundreds + thousands to our meetings these are people who are gone for Refuge in our view provisionally. And from them just as here from the Public, from Friends and Mitras we recruit our Mitras and Order members. Mitras are those who are beginning to get some idea of the difference between in our terms provisional Effective Refuge and Order members who fully realize that they weren't in fact Buddhists before, that you cannot be born Buddhist you cannot be a Buddhist by just reciting the Refuges and Precepts with everybody else. They have gone for Refuge individually under the auspices of the FWBO. Then with regard to the

question of the motives of the ex-untouchables. At the time of the original mass conversion there was a lot of criticism of Dr Ambedkar and the whole movement of mass conversion in the Hindu papers, the Hindu owned papers, saying that Dr Ambedkar's conversion and those of his followers was only a political stunt. They tried to dismiss it in that way. There is no doubt that it had political overtones, because in India religion is politics. I mean why was India divided into India and Pakistan, why were there two independent sovereign states created at the time of independence? It was for religious reasons at it were. [167] So in India religion is politics, you cannot avoid that So caste Hindus cannot accuse the ex-untouchables for being political, when they themselves are political. There are right-wing Hindus political parties just as there are right wing Christian political parties in Europe. Then again they said that the ex-untouchables weren't sincere in their conversion to Buddhism, they were just looking for some social advantage. Well they were looking for social advantage. And, in a way, why shouldn't they? The point is that you come into Buddhism, or you grasp Buddhism by the handle that you can. They don't suffer much from psychological problems they don't come into Buddhism or seek out Buddhism to solve their psychological problems, their psychological hang ups, they probably wouldn't know what you meant if you talked to them about these things, but they have social problems, so they come into Buddhism via their social problems, so it is a question of the point of approach. If they regard Buddhism only as a solution to their social problems, well then of course they have misunderstood, they have To go further, just as we understand Buddhism as a solution to our psychological problems, we've misunderstood too. So everybody approaches from a different angle, the artist might approach Buddhism from a different angle because he might get interested first of all in his art. Someone else might approach it because of meditation and no thought about Buddhism, but they want to meditate. And they happen to find that they are learning meditation under the auspices of a Buddhist movement, perhaps originally they hadn't thought about Buddhism, so in the same way the ex-untouchables they have these terrible social problems, they suffer from these social injustices and economic injustices and they want a remedy, they think that they'll find that in or can find that in Buddhism, it is through that social aspect, through Buddhism's social teaching, because it does teach that one should not discriminate between man and man on the basis of caste. They approach Buddhism from that particular angle, through that particular door. But they just have to get through that door and right into Buddhism and that is where we come in and of course as Padmavajra said they are mostly very open to the Dharma. It is not true to say that they are only interested in the social side of things, no, this was not my experience. They are fed up with politics, with their own politicians who have made a mess of things. They just want to hear the Dharma and that was true when even I was going around. They got too little of it, hey were complaining that there was no one to teach them the Dharma, they wanted to hear about the Four truths, the Eight Fold Path and all the rest of it. So it is absolutely news to them, they didn't know about these things, they were delighted to learn, but also what one must understand that for them Buddhism is not just a theory or an intellectual diversion or even a method of self-development. It is a sort of fulcrum basing themselves on which they can [168] uplift themselves in every respect. I remember quite a number of times I used to ask people why have you become Buddhist? and they always gave the same reply. Or I asked them how do you feel that now you have become Buddhist. They would always say I just feel free. SO becoming Buddhist has given them a sort of self respect and sense of liberation on the basis of which they can improve their lives in every respect and it is because there has been some improvement, even materially, that the caste Hindus are beginning to react and in some areas giving the Buddhist Ex-untouchables a really tough time. So caste Hindus were criticizing these people for, in a really hypocritical way for using Buddhism, of being politically



motivated, but that was completely baseless and those caste Hindus are the last people who should have been saying that sort of thing after the way they have treated the untouchables for so many centuries. So anyone going out to India and working with them must be very clear about these things, that, I myself for the years that I was around there I must have mass converted, it has been estimated at 200,000 people. I think all those people remember me because it is true what Padmavajra said that they are very loyal, they never forget you. There are lots of people in villages scattered in over India who have Seen me just once and heard me just once but they remember, so if Lokamitra goes or Padmavajra or Purna or anybody else goes saying that they are Sangharakshita's disciple that Sangharakshita gave them Refuges and precepts at once they make the connection and you are a friend of theirs. They don't forget. This of course is making our work very easy and it is easy in Poona comparatively speaking just because I gave so many lectures there. I gave 200 lectures in Poona all together in the course of my various visits, more than anywhere else and the people there are a bit more amenable there than elsewhere, not only the Untouchables, but the other communities. they are less violent. Padmavajra doesn't say have an experience of Nagpur, there the people including the Buddhists are very very much more rough and turbulent and difficult to deal with. But deliberately we have established ourselves in Poona first, and we are going to extend out from there. But, the going for refuge operates on these different levels and I think it helps if you think of born Buddhists in countries like Ceylon and Burma, Japan as being people who have jut gone for as it were provisional refuge, just as a cultural refuge, not an effective refuge as we understand it.

END OF Side A

All right v. 193: "Hard to find is the man supreme, such a one does not take birth everywhere but where such a wise man is born that family thrives happily."

This is a bit ironical isn't it, of course he doesn't. But who is this man [169] supreme, this? Purisa is man, male; is supreme, highest. It could mean the Buddha, but it is as though in this verse the terminology isn't yet fully established. But the term purisa was a quite important one in Ancient Indian thought. In Sanskrit it is purishat(?). It is not only the man, but it is the male, also the spirit as opposed to matter. In the Shankya[?] philosophy, the two ultimate principles are purisha[?] or spirit and prakrit[?] nature. so there are those sort of overtones. So the Buddha is called the Mahapurisa, the great man it is usually translated, that is a pre-Buddhistic term and he is described as having the characteristics, the laksanas, of the Great man, the Maha Purisha. There is a whole Sutta devoted to that topic in the Pali Canon. SO it could be the Buddha here or not, it is not differentiated as that yet.

Mark: The True Individual?

S: Probably better to render it in some such way. So it is hard to find a True Individual. Well we needn't underline that "Such a one does not take birth everywhere" So what could you say about that? Does an individual take birth anyway? Are individuals born? Are Buddhists born? No . So how do they come into existence?

Mike: They make themselves.

S: They are made and make themselves.

Murray: Is it referring here to just the fact that the person who becomes an individual isn't at all like that every day or every minute?

S: you could put it in that way because in order to become an individual you need certain faculties which perhaps you are as it were born with. Perhaps you are bright and energetic right from the beginning, but you cannot strictly speaking be born as an individual unless or course you are consciously re incarnating so to speak out of compassion. "But where such a wise man" and here the word hero used which has been previously used as a synonym for the Arhant or the Buddha, "that family thrives happily"! Kula is not family in a narrow sense it is more like clan, that group, it is the ethnic come social group" thrives happily." Now this raises the question of the relations between the individual and the group. So what do we learn about that from this particular verse and line?

Murray: The clan benefits from the individual

S: From the presence within it of an individual. I have sometimes said that you cannot even have a positive group without a spiritual community at its heart and centre. The Spiritual community sustains the group. The

group cannot sustain itself. Do you see this?

[170]

Murray: So in effect this is one of the main contributing reasons to the chaos of the West, this total absence of idealism

S: What should be the spiritual community, namely the Church, has become just another group, just another power structure, especially the Roman Catholic Church, so there is no spiritual community. Even in Classical times there was schools of philosophy, there were the mysteries, there were the oracles, they provided that kind of element, but we don't have it now, there is no sort of spiritual community in the midst of our particular social, economic, cultural group. That is reflected very clearly in the Arts, the Arts are virtually in chaos, partly for that reason. But where such a wise man is born that family thrives happily"

Murray: What is the word that translates into family?

S: Kula. As in Vajrakula, Kuladeva. The Tantric meaning is a bit different. In the Tantric sense the family of these who have received initiation in to the same spiritual i.e. Tantric practices. But in a more general sense as used here it is the clan, a number of families are organized into a clan, a number of clans organized into a tribe. It is a sub-tribe almost. It is a bit more than the extended family.

Mike: It reminds me of the passage with which I think you conclude "Human Enlightenment", almost like the justification for the spiritually developed person, he doesn't need justification, just his very presence, his existence brings benefits to the community in the broader sense,

S: Right. So let's go on to the next verse. v.194

"Blessed is the arising of the Buddhas, Blessed is the preaching of the Noble Doctrine, Blessed is the unity of the Sangha, Blessed is the asceticism of the united." The Word

translated here as Blessed is Sukha, which is also means happy or literally means happy. So this often this translated as "Happy is the arising of the Buddhas". In other words the arising of the Buddhas is a source of happiness, a source of happiness for all living beings potentially because the Buddhas show the path, they show the way. "Happy is the preaching of the Noble Doctrine" You have to watch the translation you might think that noble Doctrine is Aryan Doctrine because Noble has been formerly translated as Aryan, but here it translates "Sad" which is true or real. Happy is the teaching, the exposition of the true Dharma sometimes in Pali the word Dhamma is used, sometimes the word Saddhamma It might sometimes be for the sake of the metre, sometimes there is a sort of real distinction because Dhamma was used very very commonly in India for any Sort of teaching, any teachers teaching could be called his Dhamma, so sometimes the Buddha's teaching is especially distinguished as Saddhamma or the real Dharma. And sasana is more like exposition [171] Buddhadasa says preaching, well preaching has got its own connotations in English, but sasana is really more like exposition. SO Happy is the exposition of the true Law, true doctrine, true teaching. M

Murray: It is quite literally true if you say are helping out friends and so forth and it seems to me to be creating quite positive waves but the mirror of the Buddha, its extent is quite unimaginable if you consider all the people who he has enlightened.

S: And when one says here happy is his exposition of the dharma, well one can really see that is the case in a place like India that the exposition is a source of happiness to people. You really do find that, they really do appreciate, they really are overjoyed. Padmavajra did give a very vivid and quite faithful description of what happens, you really feel that you have made them happy by giving them a lecture. Here yes within the context of the Friends one does feel that but one didn't used to feel it always especially before the FWBO, people might look a bit reflective, thoughtful but they didn't often look happy that had received the Dharma strange to say. I noticed that a little bit in New Zealand when I gave lectures, people didn't look all that happy at the end of them, some of them looked distinctly unhappy and a few people walked out. I heard

Murray: I heard that you were giving the Christians a bit...

S: Well people with sympathies for Christianity come to listen to my lectures at their own peril. We have had people walking out even in London fairly recently. Several people walked out of one lecture at Caxton Hall, I think some because I spoke disrespectfully about God, some because I spoke disrespectfully about the family which is even worse, and I think a couple because they realized they had strayed into the wrong meeting. But it does seem sometimes to talk about or to criticize the family is worse than criticizing God. You can find even Christians who don't believe in God, but I think it is very difficult to find Christians who don't believe in the family. In fact I read in print only a Few weeks ago the statement by a priest that the Catholic church exists to support the family which is really extraordinary and then you read about the Moonies being criticized even being taken to court and they are Christians in a manner of speaking, For breaking up families. When if you read the Gospels what does Christ say about the family, he doesn't have anything very complimentary to say about it, he says Let a man leave Mother and Father, he says this very clearly, so they are supposed to be following that and when his mother appears at the door when he is busy teaching, he says "Woman what have I to do with thee?" He repudiates his own mother. But here they are criticizing the Moonies for breaking up families, you would imagine that if the Christian church is following the [172] teaching of Christ as depicted in their own scriptures

they would be breaking up families as fast as they could. But no it really does seem that the Church exists to support the family which is extraordinary, in other words the Spiritual community exists in order to keep the group going, well in our terms that is what it is. Well we believe that it is the other way round, the group exists in order to make it possible for spiritual community to come into existence. And of course when this priest speaks of the Catholic Church existing to support the family he means the nuclear family, the good old Catholic family, mother father and twenty two children. Then "blessed is the unity of the Sangha" the unity of the Sangha, [Samagghi?] is a more concrete word than the English word in translation, it is Sa, together, magghi pertains to path. It is the togetherness of those who are on the same path. That is what it literally means. It is the same pathed-ness of the Sangha is a Source of happiness The fact that the members of the spiritual community are all following the same spiritual path is a source of happiness. But why is it a Source of happiness? It is not a source of happiness because they are enjoying the experience of doing it all together in a group sense, so in what sense is it a source of happiness?

v: There is harmony between them.

S: there is harmony, but why should harmony be a source of happiness, or how is harmony a source of happiness?

Murray: Well you have got people on the same wavelength as yourself

S: Yes you can interact, you are an individuals they are an individual, you are interacting as individuals, it enhances your enjoyment of your individuality so to speak, You can communicate, so yes surely this same pathed-ness of the Sangha is source of happiness and not only a source of happiness to those belonging to that Sangha but it is a Source of happiness to those of the group within which the Sangha exists, so to speak where the group can see its same pathed-ness, can see the way in which the members, so to speak, of that spiritual community relate, it can be a source of inspiration to them. I remember once someone coming to see me, just an ordinary friend, and he had been on a retreat and the thing that had really impressed this person was the way in which the Order Members who were leading that retreat co-operated, the way in which they functioned as a team. It wasn't just as a team of, in the football sense, they were a team in a sort of a spiritual sense and this is what had impressed this person most, not the meditations, not the pujas, not the lectures, but the way in which the Order members all functioned all together in harmony as a team. So the unitedness, the same pathedness of the spiritual community can be a source of inspiration also to those outside that community. [173] Not only just to the members of it. Padmavajra mentioned in his talk, talking about Munindra that the only thing that ever made him a bit sad was when there was any sort of difference or conflict within the Sangha within the Order because that is a very serious matter. Luckily in India those difficulties are practically over, but in the early days it wasn't very easy.

Bob Jones: Causing a schism in the Sangha is one of the five major sins, why is rated quite that seriously?

S: Ah, well sanghabedha[?] I must say in Buddhist circles in the East, in Theravada circles, this is a bit of a bogey. In some Theravada circles if you express your own opinion at all your at once sort of pounced on for Sanghabedha but that is actually not so. The Buddha has made provision for Sanghabedha in the Vinaya, that is to say a correct and harmonious

Sanghabedha. Supposing the Sangha is quite big, but Sangha in this context, the Vinaya context, it means what we would call a Chapter of the Order, that is to say it is a group, a community of bhikkhus living together under the same roof and sharing a common observance, that is to say, reciting the pratimoksa together ordaining people together and so on. Now supposing certain differences of opinion arise between them and suppose these differences are serious, supposing 2 parties develop and they cannot agree and they cannot live together, the Buddha actually said and makes provision in the Vinaya for this Let them separate and form two communities, there is nothing wrong in that, if they cannot live together let them separate and form two different communities and remain on friendly terms from a distance, so to speak. Good fences make good neighbours, that sort of principle, but if any individual bhikkhu deliberately goes about stirring up divisions, saying something to that bhikkhu against that bhikkhu and something to that bhikkhu about this bhikkhu, deliberately to stir up trouble to his own private advantage that is considered as a very very serious offence and this it is said is what Devadatta did, his offence was to deliberately bring about disunion and dissension in the spiritual community. These two things are quite distinct.

Bob: So individuals falling out on matters of principle is not the same?

S: Well what does one mean by falling out? You see one can disagree but one must disagree in a friendly and temperate manner, it shouldn't become heated, one shouldn't feel threatened because somebody disagrees with you. or if someone disagrees with you you shouldn't accuse him of not being into the spiritual life and not being committed, I mean unfortunately these sort of expressions come to people very quickly, but we should be very very careful about that. If someone disagrees With you it doesn't mean that he is beyond the pale.[174]

Mike: In fact there is a world of difference between sort of where you're recognizing the limits to communication and deliberately maliciously stirring up trouble.

S: Yes and also there is Sanghabedha in the East. I mean if you take Ceylon, the bhikkhu Sangha is divided into three groups called Nikayas: there is the Sramanera Nikaya, Sammita Nikaya and Anapurna Nikaya [ʔspʔ] and they do not sit together for such functions as ordinations. Technically speaking they do not recognize one another as bhikkhus. they are bhikkhus as far as the lay people are concerned but say a bhikkhu of the Anapurna Nikaya will not be able to sit with the bhikkhus of the Sammita Nikaya to perform an ordination, some bhikkhus are trying to break down these barriers at present, but it is proving quite difficult. And when you are ordained as a bhikkhu you are told which Nikaya you belong to. I was told that I belonged to Nikaya which is a Burmese Nikaya, that my - was Burmese and belonged to that particular Nikaya. That was the first thing I was told after I became a bhikkhu, they called me aside oh you are very lucky being ordained Nikaya, it is a very old Nikaya. this is what I was told.

Cieron: Are there any doctrinal differences between them?

S: None at all (laughter) there are very few doctrinal differences. This particular bhikkhu Buddhaghata Thera? was famous for his heresy. He came to the conclusion that the Pudgalavadins were right and he announced this quite publicly. He was such a formidable scholar they didn't dare to do anything about it. But that is absolute heresy . For the Theravadins. Pudgalavada is an absolute dirty word, you are a personalist, it is held to be completely incompatible with the Anatta teaching, it is the first heresy to be refuted in the

Kathavatu, which is one of the books of the Abhidharma Pitaka, so if you declare your sympathy with Pudgalavada in Theravada circles you are really in for trouble, but old Buddhadhata could get away with it. As a result of his own studies he came to the conclusion that the Pudgalavadins were right and he said so. But he was a great exception, normally there are no doctrinal differences. The only differences are external. The Nikayas are due to, ... you see several times in Ceylon the Sangha died out, so the question was how to reintroduce it. It died out several times, the first time they brought bhikkhus from Thailand who ordained Sinhalese, and that gave rise to the Sammita Nikaya. That was in the eighteenth century and subsequently other bhikkhus came I think from Burma and ordained groups of and they Founded I think the two Burmese Nikayas and the beginning of the last century. So the only differences are external, the Sammita Nikaya they use ordinary black western umbrellas, the Sramanera Nikaya people they use Burmese parasols and the Anapurna Nikaya people are the strictest they use a [175] large palm leaf as an umbrella which is quite large, so also the Sammita Nikaya people in public very often do not cover the right shoulder. The other two Nikayas cover the right shoulder with their robe in public, there are a few other differences like that, but that is all and a slight difference in the colour of the robe. Oh another big difference the Sammita Nikaya people are the big property owners, they hold most of the monastic property and are sometimes referred to as the rich bhikkhus and the members of the other two Nikayas are sometimes referred to as the poor bhikkhus. so these are three Nikayas in Ceylon, in Thailand there are two Nikayas, there is Dhammayutaka and Maha Nikaya. Maha Nikaya is the older one, a bit like the Sammita Nikaya in Ceylon, the Dhammayutaka are the later one, they were founded by King?. Have you heard of the King of Siam, well King? became a King after being a monk for many years, because his brother or some relation died and he was next in line, so he had to leave the monastery and become the king, so he did, but before becoming King he had started up this extra strict Nikaya, he had tightened up the Vinaya rules and that was the origin of the Dhammayutakas. After becoming King of course he lived a very different kind of life of course, but he continued to support the Dhammayutaka Nikaya. So they had these two Nikayas. The Dhammayutakas maintained that they are stricter than the Maha Nikaya people I have known followers of both. the Maha Nikaya people say that the Dhammayutakas only think that they are stricter. And in Burma things are a little more complicated: I only know that in Burma there is the old famous Celebrated Nikaya and that is the one I belong to (laughter)

Clive: What is its characteristics?

S: Oh.[ :strictest?] No I believe that they are believed to be the best preachers or expounders of the dharma.

Bob: Do you anticipate this sort of development in the FWBO? Presumably after you die the unified ...[Inaudible]

S: Well I am very much aware of this, and I am always on the watch for any Sort of tendencies. This is one of the reasons why I have been stressing recently that for instance mitras belong to the whole movement. Mitras don't belong exclusively to a particular centre. They are not the exclusive property of their Chairman (laughter) They do not have complete control over them. A mitra is quite free to speak to an Order member belonging to another centre if he wishes. Do you see what I mean? You don't require permission from him. You can go on retreat on your own volition if you want to, you don't actually have to ask permission. Of course you will act in a responsible way and not leave your co-operative in the

lurch. [176] But you are an individual and you belong to the movement so to speak as a whole, not just to a particular centre. Just as the order members belong to the Order, so the mitras belong to the whole community of mitras. They are not any centre's or Chairman's private property. So this is one thing that I have been thinking quite recently. And that is why it is good for mitras to circulate a bit and have retreats and events where they meet mitras and Order members from other centres who they haven't met before. Not just stay with their own centre which may be very small and a particular type. Other-wise one can get misunderstandings like the misunderstanding of the Friend who came to see me in Christchurch, New Zealand. He said he had a problem or a doubt about the FWBO, he wanted to get more deeply involved but there was something about the FWBO he didn't like. So I said what was that? he said the FWBO is against Poetry so I said what?, so he said Its against poetry, I am really fond of poetry, I read Shelley and Keats but the FWBO is against poetry. SO I asked him a few questions and it transpired that the one Order member with whom he was in contact was not especially interested in poetry and had once made some disparaging remarks about poetry, so he took that to mean that this is the official line, the FWBO is against poetry. I pointed out that far from being against poetry we had poetry readings and some Order Members actually wrote poetry and that we gave some importance to the reading of poetry. He was delighted to hear this. You can see how easily it can happen that in a very small centre with just a few Order members that represent a very narrow sort of range of human types and interests, friends and mitras even can get quite misleading impressions So this is why it is good for them to mix on certain occasions at least and come into contact with Order members and mitras of maybe quite a different kind. Otherwise depending on the centre or the community to which you attend to belong you may be under the impression that you cannot be involved in the FWBO unless you are an artist or a writer or you cannot be involved in the FWBO unless you are physical cultivist or unless you do yoga or unless you don't have a family and don't have a regular job or do have a family and a regular job or as the case maybe. So these bigger occasions like the present one are very useful not only in other ways but in this way too particularly. For people coming from New Zealand and Finland, where there are comparatively few Order members (or maybe say from Germany or Sweden), So people look around and see that there are all sorts of people there, people they hadn't imagined could be ordained or get involved at all.

Bob: I'm beginning to see how these walls we were talking about originate because in the absence of a uniting figure-head say, if you are sending off small groups of people or only individuals all over the place who are going to carry their own particular personality in the teaching of the dharma, you minimize the number of differences that could arise [177] in cultural areas by having a set of rules.

S: Yes the rules are common or at least they should be common. Because some of the rules formulated in India couldn't be observed outside India for climatic reasons : How can you have a Rainy Season Retreat when you don't have a rainy season? but when Buddhism went up into Central Asia they called it the Summer Retreat. Actually it is not Rainy season retreat it is -?- which means more like the Rains residence, the staying in one spot during the rainy season, partly because you cannot wander then and partly because it gives you an opportunity for more intensive meditation and study and so on. But the pattern as I have often said the monks life using that expression monk in the Buddha's day, and the Buddha's own pattern was 3/4 months staying in one place communicating more intensely with others who were staying with him. there wouldn't be any reading or writing in those days, it would all be meditation, discussion and teaching one another and eight to nine months of wandering from

place to place with a begging bowl coming in contact with groups of villagers, townsfolk and teaching them the Dharma and then moving on. That was the Buddha's own pattern and the pattern of his disciples for the greater part of his life-time. Eventually of course they started staying on after the end of the rainy season, they stayed on and on and then they thought well there is not much point in going off wandering now, it is nearly time for the next rains so they stayed on and on and then maybe the lay people of that area liked them to be always on hand and available for teaching, they perhaps found it more convenient, so they gradually settled and then more permanent structures were erected for them what we now call viharas or monasteries. But originally a vihara was just a temporary lodging, a little lean-to shed or even a hollow tree or cave. Viharas weren't in buildings always, but just temporary accommodation, lodging is a much better translation than monastery which conjures up something quite grand. It is quite wrong to translate the Buddha was staying at his monastery, no the Buddha was staying at his lodging, that is nearer the truth ... Anyway teatime ...

some general discussion on Nuclear War.

... general discussion on Nuclear War, China

I think as regards the world situation we just have to work as hard as we can and as intelligent as we can, as strategically as we can and keep our fingers crossed, we are not in the position to influence world events at the moment, but I think if we were careful we could survive the worst at least some centres could if we placed them sensibly and strategically and this is one of the reasons why I emphasize that each centre should have a complete set of literature, tapes and everything.

And then there is this last line : Samaggaṃ tapo sukho -sp?- This is translated as "blessed or happy is the asceticism of the united" We have had this word TAPO before and you may remember what it means? So a source of happiness is the intensive spiritual practice of these who are, of the same-paths if one translated it literally. A source of happiness is the intensive spiritual practice of those who are treading the same path of the higher evolution. I don't know whether it can be regarded as significant but the statement that one line is devoted to the happiness of the arising of the Buddhas, one line to the happiness of the teaching of the Dharma but two lines to the happiness arising from the unity of the Order, the spiritual community. You may remember that there is a text in the Pali scriptures which is in English Conditions of Stability of Communities and community meaning here the spiritual community and there has been two seminars on this.

All right the last two verses: v.195&.196

"He who reverences those worthy of reverence,

Whether the Buddhas or their disciples,

Who have transcended all obstacles,

Passed beyond the reach of distress and lamentation,

He who reverences such peaceful and secure ones,



His merit cannot be measured by anyone as such and such"

What are these verses really saying then? If the merit of someone who reverences those worthy of reverence -cannot be measured, what does that really mean?

Murray: If you are in a position, you're receptive to say an enlightened teacher or disciple of the Buddha then the fact that you are open to them that you are willing to learn from them, the fact that you are progressing means that basically you are going to get enlightened and so your merit cannot be measured because of that.

S: It's as though that kind of reverence, to use that kind of word for the time being has a sort of transcendental quality. Because the merit it produces cannot be measured. And if something cannot be measured then it is infinite, it is unconditioned, it is transcendental. So usually one [179] thinks of prajna wisdom as transcendental but here reverence is. It seems to be suggested has a certain transcendental quality. So what is the word for reverence here? Puja. Reverence is perhaps a rather feeble translation. It is more like devotion, worship. I think Buddhahata is trying to give us a sort of rationalistic version here maybe for the benefit of English educated people who are not so happy with devotion. but one could also translate it as He who worships those worthy of worship or he who is devoted to those worthy of devotion or even he who has faith in those worthy of faith. In the Survey when discussing the two Pure Land schools I have mentioned that Faith has as they use the term is the emotional equivalent of Wisdom. One shouldn't think that Wisdom is necessarily intellectual in form. I think that this is quite important to realize that emotion also can as it were intuit the Unconditioned, that Insight is as much emotional as intellectual. But usually the way we speak of Insight it suggests that it is more intellectual, than emotional maybe entirely intellectual, but it isn't. It is as much emotional as it intellectual, it can therefore be expressed in terms of emotion as well as in terms of thought. It therefore can be expressed in terms of reverence worship devotion as well as in terms of understanding and insight, so this is why probably the Buddha says that He who reverences those worthy of reverence etc., his merit cannot be measured by anyone. So this gives a very high place to reverence, to devotion, to worship. It is not just silly sentimental emotionalism it is a deeply heartfelt sort of attitude which has an almost transcendental quality about it. It is something existential not something just on the surface.

Mike: this comes up very much with the Jinas and other forms of the Yidam, that you cannot relate to them at all unless it is with an emotional bond.

S: Right, that is why you cannot just visualize the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as a concentration exercise, that is why we say that we don't usually give these sort of practices to those who aren't effectively committed, because it is only when you are effectively committed and you really go for refuge that you have any sort of sense of the Unconditioned at all and these after all are forms, aspects embodiments of the Unconditioned, you cannot just use their "forms" as visualization exercises, so this is why broadly speaking we don't encourage friends and to take up the visualization, they are not just exercises. You cannot really "visualize" unless there is devotion there, you cannot have that devotion unless to some extent you go for refuge.

You cannot visualize a Buddha or Bodhisattva sort of coldly and scientifically just to improve your concentration.

Mike: It is a bit like the difference between going to a museum and looking [180] at a beautiful rupa and seeing a figure on a shrine.

Murray: It is almost quite natural that if through a certain teaching you have arrived at state, maybe a peak meditation experience, where you do have a form of transcendental insight one would naturally feel gratitude towards one's teacher and the Buddha because without them it would have been impossible.

S: Yes quite. So the verse does go into it in more detail "He who reverences, worships or is devoted to those worthy of reverence whether the Buddha or their disciples who have transcended all obstacles. The word translated as obstacles is Papanca which really means something more like all complications, all entanglements in other words the whole samsaric process. Passed beyond the reach of distress and lamentation, in other words they have transcended suffering, he who reverences such peaceful and Secure ones, his merit cannot be measured by any one as such and such." the word translated as peaceful is interesting its nibbute it is nirvana as a verb, I have translated it as nirvanized. It is often translated literally as extinguished or extinct, but the extinction is not of being, in a manner of speaking, but of greed hatred and delusion.

Bob: Is the concept of merit an original of the Buddha's or was it something that he adopted...

S: Merit doesn't seem to be stressed in what seem to be the Buddha's own teaching as far as we can make them out from the Pali Canon, because the Buddha was concerned with the achievement of Enlightenment here and now in this life and you were concerned with the accumulation of merit only if you want to be reborn after death in a happy heavenly world or in a prosperous human condition. in a sense you need Punya in the sense of positive mental states, skilful mental states as a foundation for your meditation and insight but in that context they are not usually spoken of in terms of Punya, but more in terms of skilful action and so on. Punya, the connotation is merits redounding to your benefit in future lives. those things are mentioned in the Buddhas teachings but they are certainly not given any emphasis. But in modern Buddhism, that is to say the contemporary Buddhisms of Ceylon, especially the Theravada countries, merit making is the important occupation. In Sinhalese it is called Pinkana? a merit making, which means either making offerings of food to the monks, or putting a new spire on a stupa or building a vihara . Merit making is the main occupation of the laity, especially by making offerings to monks, and they hope that the merits that they make in this way will help them to a future better life, in the sense of a richer more prosperous life, higher social position or even a rebirth in heaven. So the spirit of all that is not really in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. [181]

But the Buddha does say that if you follow the spiritual path and you are not so fortunate to make it in this life, when you are reborn that will be down to your credit so to speak and you will be able to start under better conditions, but the emphasis is not on merit making for that purpose.

Bob: Did it arise out of expediency or out of an element of insight?

S: There was the fact that the bhikkhus in the early days were dependant on the laity and it was believed that the more holy the person to whom you made your offering the greater merit that resulted, so people were very anxious to seek out particularly holy men. They still are in

Theravada countries to make their offerings to them because it is a better investment so to speak, the monks needed to be supported so they had a sort of interest in encouraging the lay people to support them, therefore a sort of interest in elaborating this doctrine of *Punya*, that it was a source of *Punya*, merit, to make offerings to them. It is very much a question of the right degree of emphasis, because yes, one cannot deny that it is good and meritorious to support those who are living a spiritual life more intensively than you are yourself, but on the other hand it is all too easy for you to start emphasizing the meritoriousness of lay people making offerings to you so that you can be supported, in principle so that you can lead a spiritual life. But only too often in modern Theravada countries you are supported so that you can be supported. Being supported is an end in itself.

Mike: It does seem to be really dangerous narrow ground, it does seem a bit suspicious that the attitude of one giving in merit is not stressed more

S: Yes Some bhikkhus in Theravada countries really emphasize, even exaggerate this doctrine of merits because every time a bhikkhu is entertained say to lunch, before twelve o'clock, the orthodox procedure is that all the dishes are handed to you one by one, you have actually to receive them into your hand, they must be offered by men, not by women and you then administer the Refuges and Precepts, you chant some verses of blessing and then you give a short discourse, all this time the food is getting cold (laughter) And they always say the same thing that they usually compare the giver to Anathapindaka, oh you are a great giver and you are heaping up an enormous quantity of merit, you will certainly go to heaven, you are very pious upasakas, you are like Anathapindaka and Visaka[?], you are like the supports of Buddhism, they really lay it on thick and it is maybe some trifling offering at least compared with Anathapindaka. I remember this happening in Nepal when I went there in 1952, there was an exhibition of the relics of Sariputra and Moggallana they were received by the King of Nepal and the King of Nepal offered alms to [182] bhikkhus in his palace one day and an eminent Sinhalese monk, the same one who was strict about the twelve o'clock business and for whom I put the clock back, he was invited, being very senior, to deliver the elocution in honour of the King and he did it in Sinhalese. And another friend of mine another senior Indian bhikkhu translated it from Sinhalese for the benefit of the King into Hindi. So this bhikkhu told me afterwards he had been really ashamed to translate those flatteries, which of course compared the King to all great Buddhist monarchs of the past and a glorious destiny was predicted for him etc., so this bhikkhu said I had to tone it down a bit, I just didn't have the face to translate it all literally (laughter). So the Sinhalese do this sort of thing, they really lay it on thick. Perhaps for socio-economic reasons it is necessary to assure the laity of the enormous quantity of merit that they are heaping up by their offerings and reassure them that really will go to heaven. And they always end up by saying and of course you'll gain enlightenment, you will gain Nirvana in the end. So the laity are all so pleased, and humble but it works as a system for supporting the monks, you cannot deny that, but the spiritual value is on the whole quite another matter. It keeps the socio-economic-cultural system going, but it doesn't really encourage the laity to practise the Dharma as individuals, well they are not even supposed to in the Theravada really, they're supposed to just support the monks, that is the popular teaching anyway.

Mike: It does sound a lot like giving generously to the collection plate in a Protestant Church and hoping that you won't go to hell.

S: Well it is a bit more than that, because you are definitely assured, there is no question of

just hoping, you are definitely assured of heaven by the bhikkhu in his talk, you feel that you have done good and no doubt some people do offer very sincerely, one cannot deny that, and have a genuine respect for the bhikkhus sometimes misplaced, but on the whole it is a bit of a racket.

Clive: It is actually in a way preventing people from growing, if they think that they are assured of Enlightenment, if they just do this one thing...

S: It almost amounts to that in practice.

Mike: there was one occasion even when I was there in India there was a meeting at the University for some of the Buddhists and there were two young Theravada bhikkhus and Lokamitra on the platform, and we were all sat up to the platform as well, and before Lokamitra gave his speech the Theravadin bhikkhu got up and ran through a spiel about giving to support the monks and then Lokamitra got up and gave one of his fist [183] thumping talks, I think it was basically a condensation of your Brighton lecture, about doing something and it couldn't have been more of a contrast.

S: So these particular verses show a very different spirit, it doesn't say anything about the reverencing of monks, it says reverencing those worthy of reverence. The Theravadins will interpret this automatically as referring to monks and as meaning that lay people should reverence monks, but this is not what the verse says. One cannot as it were take ones stand on an official position. This comes back in a way to what we were talking about the other day, in terms of communication, communication must be open. You must approach one another without any preconception about who is superior, who is inferior, who knows more who knows less, no just communicate, it will soon become obvious if there is any distinction and then you can recognize it, quite objectively and happily, but not insist on it on a condition of the communication. You cannot say to another "you cannot communicate with me unless you first of all recognize that I am such and such, that is to close the gates of communication. You can't even say to someone "You got to remember that I am an Order member you can only communicate with me if you bear that in mind" Well what does it mean to say that one is an Order member that one is committed to the Three Jewels, well in the course of genuine communication that fact will emerge and can be recognized. A sort of formal recognition of it in advance as a condition a precondition of the communication is just it is a hindrance.

Clive: Actually it seems that if an Order member said that and by that he meant that you've got to remember that I am a committed Buddhist, that seems quite acceptable, but if he means that you've got to remember that I am superior to you.

S: right, if it is thought of as a position, but you cannot even insist that you are committed in advance, you might be talking to a friend just on the edges of the movement and he doesn't accept that you are more committed than he is, he may think well you are an Order member, that's all right maybe you are committed but I am committed in my own way. that is sometimes a micchaditthi but in order to overcome that you cannot insist that in advance he accepts you as more committed than him and therefore you are the one to tell him what commitment is, no you cannot, maybe you have to say well you are committed in your own way, maybe you are more committed than me, I don't know and you have to take it easy and not insist that you are more advanced and committed than he is, even though you may be. You cannot insist that he communicate with you on your terms any more than he can insist

that you should communicate with him on his terms, you've got to communicate through some common, as it were, neutral [184] ground first. just as human being talking together.

Clive: one of the best ways to test one's commitment is to see how they are involved how much work they are doing, but it doesn't necessarily mean that because they are doing all these things they are any more committed than someone who might not be doing.

S: It is very difficult to compare commitments. I think that one has to be very careful about that, sometimes one hears this sort of language, he is more committed, or he is expressing his commitment more but you have to be very careful about that. It is possible sometimes for people to slacken off and they do slide a bit from their commitment and then that needs to be pointed out, but one should be very careful about insisting that you are more committed than somebody else or that you are expressing your commitment more adequately than somebody else, Or somebody else is back-sliding, one mustn't insist on that in such a way to drive the person away, and put them out of communication more than perhaps they are. Or it could be that you are completely mistaken, they may be doing things of which you are not aware, or maybe in conditions of which you are just not aware.

Mike: I think there is a danger probably for all of us that it is difficult to see whether somebody is making a major effort or growing or changing if it is [n a way that is not only different from our own, but one that we cannot understand...

S: Yes, that person may be doing the opposite thing, he may be very withdrawn by nature or conditioning, so he is making an effort to be outward going, you're by nature very extrovert, you're making an effort to maybe be quieter and talk less in a sense you are making an opposite effort. But you are approaching the common path just from opposite ends of the spectrum. One has to be very careful about one's judgements and assessments about other people, especially reflecting on their commitment, this can be very cruel sometimes if in the course of argument you have to disagree with someone and then you try to drive home your argument by just questioning the other person's commitment. This is something that one should never, well maybe sometimes you do raise the question, but this is an absolute last resort, otherwise you almost cutting the ground from under that person's feet. You are almost taking their commitment away from them, So one should be very careful about that, never question someone's commitment.

Clive: I seem to remember that was quite common not so long ago.

S: Well I can say for myself that I have never questioned the commitment of any order member regardless of what they have done or not done. I take it that so long as they are in the Order, even if we don't see them for [185] years on end that they are committed and that they know what they are doing. I mean if they don't know what they are doing and are not able to decide for themselves, well how can they be Order members anyway. So if there is any doubt, I give them the benefit of the doubt.

Clive: Are you saying that when someone is ordained you have the confidence that they have their wits about them and always will have.

S: Yes, one could put it in that way. That one cannot sort of nurse people too much, you cannot take over their responsibility for themselves, they are responsible for themselves. That

is what it means, part of what it means to be ordained; you have committed yourself, how can you commit yourself if you are not responsible for yourself? So I take it if someone disappears for a couple of years, an order member, occasionally it happens he knows what he is doing. It would be good if he explained to us why he was doing that, but you cannot automatically say he is not committed because he has not been seen for a couple of years, you don't know, so you should give him the benefit of the doubt. Suppose he misses a meeting, a class, a meditation, a retreat, you shouldn't automatically say oh well he is probably less committed now than he was, no, you don't know. But people make these sort of sweeping judgements, one should never do that. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Have confidence in him as a human being, he knows what he is doing, treat him as an adult, not as a child. He doesn't have to be told what to do or reminded every five minutes that he has committed himself, that shouldn't be necessary.

Murray: It seems that most ideas of superiority and inferiority are based on the conceit of 'I am',..

S: Well what does the Buddha say? He says that one should not think of others as superior to oneself, or inferior or as equal. In the modern world we have fetish of equality, everybody has got to be equal, so people insist that "I am equal to you", well the Buddha says we shouldn't even think in that way, don't think even in those terms otherwise that also precludes communication if you insist that you are equal to the other person, because maybe you are not, If you are not, then you operating from a false basis and precluding the possibility of communication, so you should be completely open and not even think in those terms, not even in a way want to find out whether you are superior or inferior or equal, it doesn't matter. it is quite irrelevant, just communicate and something will emerge, even then you won't be bothered too much to ascertain whether that means that you know at the end of the discussion you have had the best of it or he has had the best of it, or you are superior-or he is superior, sometimes it is quite impossible to say who has gained more, who has given more, it is quite impossible to say, you shouldn't bother. It doesn't matter.

[186]

Mike: Why should you not view some people as superior? It seems to me that it can be very beneficial to recognize...

S: I think the word superior is a loaded word, therefore I don't use it in this context, but you can certainly have reverence for those worthy of reverence, but it doesn't say that they are superior to you. You reverence those worthy of reverence. If you feel that they really are worshipful, you worship them, but to regard them as superior, that is another thing, they might regard you as worshipful. The Buddha doesn't say that those who are worthy of reverence are superior to you in the way in which we often or the sense that we usually use that term. It is no question of grovelling to them as to your superiors, you reverence them because they are worthy of reverence.

Bob: You couldn't stretch the term to cover the rejoicing in merits? They are not synonymous, but they are certainly associated. You see some really estimable qualities in somebody, you feel really happy that those qualities are there, that is rejoicing in merits, you have a deep respect for those qualities, well that is your reverence, that is your devotion. Devotion is perhaps a bit more strong, a bit more intense than reverence, because devotion suggests that you reverence those qualities so deeply that you just want to give yourself to them or give

yourself to the person possessing them, place yourself at his service, so to speak. So devotion is a stronger term and worship is perhaps stronger still. The connotations of these terms do vary.

Andy: I suppose when you get a richness in people, of personalities you can worship some of them as embodying something that you want to develop without it negating your own being. There is so much other potential...

S: And you can say that someone is superior to you in a certain respect, but you cannot say that he is superior to you full stop. He is superior to me in carpentry or mental arithmetic, but that doesn't mean that he superior to you as a human being, Human beings cannot really be compared in that sort of way.

Bob: I found what you said the other night about the rungs of the ladder particularly useful in that respect. You can experience yourself on Rung 30 in that respect and even on the bottom rung in other respects. That is quite useful way of seeing other people as well.

end of side A

S: You are experiencing them as being them on say Rung two, well remember that in other respects they are on Rung Twenty, which perhaps you never touch with any part of yourself. They are as complex as that, or can be [187] as complex as that, even as unintegrated as that.

Mike: So in a sense one can almost say that would you really take the most optimistic view the most positive view of people always because almost in almost anybody there is going to be an x quality Of qualities that one can admire in a way that is going to benefit oneself as well.

S: Well I used to find this with the Ex-untouchables, if one talked with caste Hindus and asked why aren't these people given proper religious teaching one of the excuses is that they are just not able to understand they are so low that it was a waste of time talking to them about anything higher. But that was not my experience at all, ever. I went around to scores or even hundreds of villages and townships, I addressed tens of thousands of people and I didn't used to water it down for them, I never did that, I made a point of... first of all I used to talk about the meaning of the refuges, the going for refuge just as I talk nowadays virtually, then I would explain the precepts ... well explaining the refuges of course meant talking about the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, then I would go on to talk about the Four Truths, the Eightfold path, Karma, Rebirth, Dukkha, nitya, anata Conditioned Co-production, I'd explain the whole lot. Not all at once of course. Some villages I went to a number of times or gave several talks in one village, but I would go forward all the time, sometimes I was explaining quite abstruse things about the difference between causality, conditionality to audiences of illiterate villagers and they were definitely following it all, definitely understanding. I mean admittedly I was able to put it quite clearly, but they could understand it, they were not in the least deficient in intellectual capacity, despite a lack of education very often. That had nothing to do with it, so there was absolutely no reason, no excuse for saying that they had not been given proper religious teaching because they were incapable of understanding it. They were no less capable than anybody else. So this was in a way quite an eye-opener for me. I came to the definite conclusion that regardless of social position and cultural background and questions of literacy or illiteracy, broadly speaking the vast majority of people had much the same intellectual

capacity and were quite well able to understand whatever I had to say, provided I put it clearly enough. It is very easy for the more educated, so to speak, to adopt a patronizing attitude to the less educated assuming that they are less intelligent. That is certainly not the case.

Clive: It's like the tools of education are like a manifestation of intelligence, a sort of common ground where people can communicate intelligently but people who are educated forget and think that that common ground is actually intelligence itself a thing in itself.

S: mm, the fact that well you make a clever reference to Shakespeare [188] which others will pick up on and laugh at, that doesn't mean that you are more intelligent than those who miss the reference because they have never read Shakespeare, maybe never heard of his name, but yes people do tend to presume that because you have got that common pattern of references that you are more intelligent, but it only means that you have followed the same course of study. It used to really grieve me sometimes in India when I saw some wretched person, sometimes from the Ex-untouchable community itself who had a bit of Western education; had been maybe to college, dressed in a Western Suit, pair of dark glasses, wristwatch, cheap fountain pen, that was the uniform as it were, and the way in which the ordinary illiterate villagers would look up to him, he was a sort of god and he would behave in a rude, arrogant sort of fashion which was painful to see. It really show a false sense of values. He would be perhaps a young chap, maybe 20/22 and he would talk really rudely to the old men of the village, order them about, tell them to go and fetch a chair, bring him some tea, just using them like servants, and they would accept this because they really confused education with higher intelligence. So I did my best to undermine that too. And sometimes he'd be sitting in some wretched hut, usually a politician or would be politician and they would bring a chair for him to sit on and he would look at it contemptuously and say "Wipe it, I can't sit on that", and they would humbly wipe the chair and he would inspect it and then deign to sit down on it. I saw all these kinds of tricks. On another occasion I saw a man like this, a would be politician get down out of the train, received with garlands and all that and the first thing he would say" Have you got a really good dinner for me tonight?" "Oh, yes, yes" "what is it, chicken?" "oh, yes, yes". Where are you going to put me up, which hotel? Is it a really good one?" "Oh yes, yes, we've put you up at the best hotel" ... only then would he agree to proceed to the meeting.

Clive: The thing is that the Indians actually respond to that.

S: Unfortunately they do. In a way that tells against us a bit because if you ... with many Indians, due to their conditioning, due to the caste system if you behave in a natural open friendly way they will take it that you are inferior and start behaving in a superior way, you have to be really careful of that until you know people a bit and they know you.

Clive: Are you suggesting that you behave in a slightly..

S: ...reserved fashion, yes, you mustn't be too friendly in an overt way too quickly with some people. With very ordinary people it is all right, you have to be very careful with the educated, especially the semi-educated. The more ordinary the people the more you can be yourself and not bother about these things, that is what I feel. But with the semi-educated especially you really have to watch your step because they take advantage of [189] you if you gave them the opportunity.



Mike: Did you have the trouble with these local politicians that Lokamitra seems to have?

S: I had far, far more. Mainly with lay political leaders, there were really no bhikkhus around in those days except the two or three I took around with me. But with the lay politicians I had to be so careful. There were so many parties and they were all equal and really afraid that bhikkhus would infiltrate, get influence with the ex-untouchables Buddhists. They wanted that only they themselves should be the influential persons, it was out of the question to try to raise money from among the ex-untouchables, because the political leaders wanted to lay their hands on the money that was available and then again they were always trying to inveigle you into identifying yourself with their party which would mean that you were in opposition to other parties, so I had to be really careful, I avoided it only with infinite diplomacy and therefore I established a reputation of not being mixed up in any group or any political party and it was that that was one of my main strengths in that part of India working among these people and one of the ways in which I maintained it was by never staying with them, I always stayed with Hindu or Parsee friends so I never actually identified myself with any group, that is to say within their community. So I avoided their party politics, and if I accepted an invitation to speak at a meeting organized by one particular party, I always made it clear that I was not identified with that party, and spoke well of people who were known to belong to other parties, because I had to know all this. I remember one example, I've talked about the mass conversion at Nagpur, this was held on 13 acres of land which is now known as the bhumi(?), the initiation ground, so some years after Ambedkar's death there was a big dispute among different groups of these followers over the ownership of that land different groups all applied to the government to grant them that land and the big tussle was going on, and they tried to involve me, so what happened ... I didn't know about this at the time ... but anyway what happened, I received an invitation to give a talk on Buddhism on this land on one Sunday morning, so I agreed because I was giving talks under the auspices of all the different groups in that area, so I went along, so gave the Refugees and Precepts, gave a talk, I was garlanded, it was quite a small meeting, just a few hundred people present, so at the end the organizer came forward, he was a man called -?-, who is now dead, and I knew he was one of the most cunning and also clever and feared politicians among the ex-untouchables. I first saw him sitting in the front row when I was giving a talk and I asked who is that man? because he seemed so full of hatred and negative feelings that I really marked him out and I was told [190] that is Mr -?-, who was a member of parliament and a prominent leader, but he had organized this little meeting on this land, so after my lecture he said Bhante would you just please do one thing more for us, would you please, plant this bodhi sapling, so he had this little sapling in a pot from a bodhi tree and brought forward a shovel. I was to just dig a few spadefuls of earth and plant that bodhi tree, which was quite appropriate, planting a bodhi tree in that place. I saw at once what was up, they were trying to establish a legal claim to that area on behalf of their group and trying to involve me and give the appearance that I was supporting because I had planted that tree, so I felt, uh oh, that is what it is all about, is it? So I said, Oh yes, I am very happy to do it, so I took up the spade, then I paused and said where did you get this bodhi sapling? He said 'oh we got it just over in Nagpur somewhere,' so I said Oh no, that won't do, I said it is a wonderful idea to plant a bodhi tree sapling but we have to get one from Bodh-Gaya, that is the tradition. So his face fell, he knew that ... (laughter) but he couldn't say anything, so I seized the opportunity, I said 'not only bring it from Bodh-Gaya, but it had to be brought by bhikkhus, and it had to be in a silver pot' (laughter)

v: Were you making all this up?

S: Well no actually it was true. So I was too cunning to make it up, so I said "we had better not do this. it is not right just to do it in this fashion, it is not fitting, the sanctity of the place, the importance of the occasion, we just don't plant Bodhi trees in this casual way" so after all I was the authority on Buddhism so he couldn't say anything against that, but he knew quite well that I had just rumbled to his game and he treated me very warily after that. But this is just one example. There were hundreds of this sort of thing happening, people would try to inveigle me in this sort of way, but I seem to have a nose for this sort of thing, and I was never caught. Other bhikkhus who tried to do something walked right into the trap; there was one particular bhikkhu, he was the one who always ate before twelve o'clock, he went to Nagpur, established himself in a hotel and started giving lectures. So he started saying We bhikkhus are your leaders, don't take any notice of any other people, we bhikkhus will lead you and the local leaders didn't like that, The next meeting he held they circulated hand bills criticizing him very violently and making all sorts of personal allegations against him, all made up, and thousands of these were distributed and he couldn't show his face in Nagpur again. so they are quite capable of doing these sorts of things, so is power and money that is involved so the ex-untouchables themselves have thrown up some very undesirable people as leaders, but anyway while [191] I was busy setting up the FWBO, those people, those pseudo-leaders among the ex-untouchables, they more or less hanged themselves with their own rope so by the time Lokamitra got there, they were mostly entirely discredited and people were all the more ready then to listen to Lokamitra knowing especially that he came from me. So I couldn't have done very much earlier on, but after twelve years they got pretty disillusioned with those political leaders of theirs. And we get a bit of trouble from them, we had a bit recently with somebody, the local Buddhist organization and it's secretary who got up at a big public meeting when Lokamitra was present and told everybody, with thousands of people present, that they should only support his organization not any other and that foreign Buddhists had no right to come here and nobody should listen to them etc. etc. and then Lokamitra got up and gave his lecture which they all really loved and they were selling Buddhayan around the fringes of the meeting. So they cannot do very much these people. But I think that Lokamitra could not have managed in those days, because he is too straight forward. I am able to be diplomatic and indirect when necessary. I think that he hasn't quite got that gift, although he is learning, but it is not in accordance with his nature, he likes to speak what he thinks right out and tell them. And now that is all right, that is OK. more or less. He can. But in those days one had to tread so warily and I really in a way consider it my main achievement that I was able to pick my way through these minefields and never be identified with any particular group which would have alienated the sympathy of people in other groups and hindered my work. I could go around freely and talk with everybody. In Nagpur I stayed with an old Brahmin friend who translated all my talks he considers himself a Buddhist of sorts, (well that is something else) but any way he was a good old friend of mine and he translated excellently, he was over seventy and he was still translating for me when he was eighty he was full of vigour. And some Buddhist ex-untouchables didn't like that I was staying with him at all, but any way that helped because had I stayed with them I would have had to stay with the followers of this group or with the followers of that group, but by staying with my old Brahmin friend who I had known from before the conversion movement, I was able to avoid that. And they would say Well why do you stay with -?- I would say well he is just-an old friend of mine, I used to stay with him before mass conversion, before ever I was thought of by you, so I am not going to give him up now, I have always stayed with him, and I am going to stay with him every time and I did, and they just had to accept it. He knew quite well what they used to say, but he would say "No the bhikkhu is staying with me, he is not going to stay with you, you don't know how to look after him" . He was quite fiery and I used

to be well looked after by him and his brother and his brother's wife and their [192] children, I used to stay in the Brahmin quarter and sally forth to these ex untouchable meetings translated by this old Brahmin who was this very fiery character, who came from a group of Brahmins who were sort of war like Brahmins and well known for their fiery characters, but he had become a Buddhist or very sympathetic to Buddhism in early life, didn't observe the caste system at all, he didn't believe in it. so I kept up contact with people outside in this way and also a piece of advice that I gave to Lokamitra was keep up as many contacts as you can outside the Buddhist movement, that was one of my strong pieces of advice because he had some friends there already, Parsee,. In India to function you need as wide a range of contacts as possible, don't confine yourself to contacts with the Buddhists or the Ex-untouchables, make Friends with other people also, this will help you in your work, besides giving you a broader perspective on things, so he has followed that. He is in touch with quite a few of my old friends who are not Buddhists or not ex untouchables and some of them are helpful. There was one old friend of mine who is a Parsee by birth and she paid all the expenses of my stay in India last time I went there, she knew from Lokamitra that I was coming and she said I am going to pay for his expenses and she did. In India one needs lots of friends to survive, people in different sorts of positions in different communities So that where necessary one can pull a few strings, you cannot really manage in India, without this, so Lokamitra is learning all this, taking my advice right at the beginning. And also if you have got friends outside the ex untouchable community, through you these ex-untouchable Buddhists will come into contact with other people, they will widen their contact. You don't want to keep them within an Ex untouchable Buddhist ghetto. Otherwise what is the point of them being converted from a social point of view. So quite a few of my especially English-knowing Ex untouchable Buddhist friends I used to introduce to my Parsee friends and Christian friends and European friends and in this way they got out of considering themselves as Untouchables and they got used to being treated in a friendly human way by other people outside their community. So this all useful, it is all part of our work in a broader sense. If you go and see a Parsee lady or a Jain merchant who is a friend of yours, well take along your Ex-untouchable Friend and just introduce him. They don't usually meet such people. So you have to have quite a broad outlook, if you are to work in India as well as having plenty of drive, energy, initiative, resourcefulness and all the rest of it. And also I told Lokamitra, well if he keeps up his friendships outside the ex untouchable Buddhist community well he has got the opportunity of a bit of rest and relaxation, sometimes he will need a bit of a break, well all right go and spend the evening with one of your non-Buddhist friends and just have a friendly meal and listen to some music. [193] You need that sort of rest from time to time. Because in India if you are with the ex untouchable Buddhists you are on duty all the time, you are surrounded by them, there are thousands of them and occasionally you need to get away and not talk about the Buddhist movement and meetings and classes, fund raising and distributing the magazine, sometimes for just a few hours you need to get away from all that, you cannot do it with Buddhists, because they just want to go on talking shop all the time. Shop is their life, quite rightly, so if you want to get away for a few hours and rest, well then you have to go and see a non-Buddhist friend if you don't go on solitary retreat. So if you want a bit of social relaxation you have to go to your non-Buddhist Friends. Anyway that is a bit of a digression. But to be forewarned is to be forearmed; I sometimes say that it would be good if every Order Member in the course of their experience of life as an Order member as a committed Buddhist spent a couple of years in India, I think it would be very good thing if every Order member could have that experience, health permitting. I think it would really broaden one's outlook.

[194]

End of tape 10.

S: All right, a new chapter "The Magga Vagga"? The path". Verse Z73: Text: "Best of paths is the Eightfold path. Best of truths are the Four Noble Truths, Best of conditions is passionlessness, Best of bipeds is the seeing one (the Man of Vision) S: So we have already encountered the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths, but here we as it were come back to them. And the Buddha says that the Eightfold path is the best of paths and the Four Noble truths the best of truths. What do you think is the point of making such statements? What sort of other paths for instance would the Buddha have in mind?

Andy: Other teachings? Other teachers?

Murray: But even then, every group is claiming that their s is the best, that their-s is the way to the truth and so on and so forth.

S: Well one might ask "How does one determine what is the best path?" It is easy enough to say that the Eightfold Path is the best path; that amounts to saying that the Path taught by the Buddha is the best path. Even that Buddhism is the best path, even that Buddhism is the best religion. So what grounds have we for making this sort of statement.? Or what are the criteria to be applied to paths in general in order to determine which is the best? Is it appropriate even to think in terms of a best? this is the Sort of question that arises. Sometimes you hear people say in the West "Well you Buddhists consider Buddhism the best religion, but wherein are you different from the Christians, because they consider Christianity to be the best? They consider Christianity to be the only true religion and you apparently believe Buddhism to be the only true religion, wherein do you differ? You seem to be just as narrow minded, just as intolerant, just as dogmatic." sometimes one hears this sort of statement made.

Murray: You've got to take it from a subjective point of view, how does it affect myself, is Buddhism making me, is it liberating me emotionally and when I apply my rationale to Buddhism does it make sense...

S: So sometimes one says that Buddhism is the best, one means for me. The suggestion being that some other religion or some other path might be best for somebody else, but isn't that in a way rather ducking the question? Live and let live, if you don't interfere with me, I won't interfere with you. If you don't probe into my Buddhism too much, I won't probe into your Christianity too much. Buddhism is best for me, OK., Christianity is best for you, this is almost taking refuge in subjectivism because then somebody might say, "well the best path for me is animism or what suits me best is cannibalism, human sacrifice", and then what can one [194] say?

Murray: Well then you can start saying the reasons I didn't get into Christianity are because the Christian god is the god of fear and so on and on that basis you can rationally and emotionally put your argument forward.

S: So you would say then that the Eightfold path or the Buddha's path is the best for human beings in general in as much as they are human beings? Sometimes can one imagine any one being helped by any of the other religions? Does it actually happen that they do make any spiritual progress at all? Or that they don't?

Murray: My brother is an Anglican minister and he has developed a taste for Western culture, he is living an ethical life and to a certain extent he is developed and got himself together but he seems to have plateaued out quite early on.

Mike: I think that brings up the question "Best in what way?" Is it best just in making you happy, is it best in sorting out your problems or is it best in taking you to answer the question why the Buddha started wandering, in the sense like the answer to the question of old age, disease and death.

S: Well Buddhism would define that path as the best that is able to take you in fact to take the greatest number of people, individuals, to Enlightenment. But anyway I think I think that there is another way of looking at it. The way in which we have looked at it so far, even the terms in which we have been discussing it so far are not really the correct ones, in this sense One has say this conception of Enlightenment or Of an Ultimate Goal for the individual human being, so the question is how is he to get there? he gets there by following a certain path, so the Eightfold path really represents, not just one religion amongst others but the sum total of those conditions which are indispensable for the realization of Enlightenment by an individual human being. You see what I mean? These are really the terms in which the matter is to be expressed. It may be that some of these conditions are found within what are known as the religions; Christianity may be, Hinduism, Islam, but I think we can say on the behalf of Buddhism that within the Eightfold path are in fact contained the totality of the conditions. Whereas in some of the religions that I have mentioned whereas certainly certain conditions may be present, certain others are not present and also one might say that in various religions the path is not presented in any case so unambiguously as a path, in some religions even, ethnic elements are mixed up with the teaching, so the path such as it is is obscured, in some religions the conception 'the path' hardly emerges. So I think this is more correctly the way in which the matter is to be expressed. [196] By the Eightfold Path one doesn't just mean the path taught by the Buddha in a narrow almost sectarian sense, but the sum total of those conditions which human beings down the ages have found necessary if they are to develop spiritually and eventually gain what we call Enlightenment.

Brian: In answering that question is it not important to define Enlightenment as well?

S: Well you will have to say something about that, if you are talking with non-Buddhists you will have speak about it very broadly because you can take as common ground, say talking to a Christian or a Hindu or Muslim or a Jew that they don't regard this life as ordinarily lived as the aim and object of human existence. They all accept in some general way that there is higher goal, but from a Buddhist point of view their conception of that higher goal is rather limited, even in their more philosophical formulations. So for the Buddhist, Enlightenment is the Goal, and that we can speak of it to followers of other religions as the highest conceivable state or condition of human perfection. If we speak in this broadly general terms what we say will be at least intelligible and what we say will be acceptable to the people to whom we are speaking, we not go into the details of exactly the nature or state of that enlightened consciousness, but make it clear that as Buddhists that at least we have a conception of a state of perfected humanity, which goes far beyond anything that we presently experience and the path or the Eightfold path is just the sum total of those conditions which need to be fulfilled by the individual human being for that state of perfection to be reached and realized. So it isn't a question of looking around in a sectarian minded sort of way and saying well Buddhism is the best, Buddhism is the greatest. It is not that.

Mike: It seems that the crunch is really that Point where the Christians say cannot possibly accept that there is a higher goal than not being damned and going to heaven, that is the critical point, because if he doesn't accept that the whole purpose of the Eightfold path disappears.

S: I think that for some modern, not to say modernist, Christians it isn't easy to accept that path because though they continue to call themselves Christians they have in fact lost their faith in any transcendental goal of human existence. Many of them no longer believe in God. If one reads some books written by Christians of this sort one is almost left with the impression that doubting and being confused is almost a merit. Also a liberal minded intellectually sort of with it Christian may say well I don't believe in god, I don't believe in anything, I don't know where I am, but I am just looking around for the answers, I haven't got any, but you still go on if you are a clergyman celebrating the [197] services of the Church etc. You almost make a virtue of your confused State of mind. So someone like this will not be in a very good position to recognize such a thing as a path, a path that will lead some where, he has lost all sense of direction even as a Christian, perhaps he retreats into social work or something of that sort with some vague sort of religiosity attached to it. He has some vague reverence or devotion to the person of Christ, but doesn't know really who or what Christ was, might be even prepared to admit that Christ didn't exist possibly, that is the sort of state that some modernist Christian clergymen are in. So if you meet a person of that sort you'd have to tread ... try to clarify his basic confusion first. say "Now look here, you are not really a Christian, you don't really believe in it, you might as well start all over again, see what we have to say, this is what we believe, this is what we have tried, this is what we are trying, this is what we are finding does work. Sometimes of course people bring in the question of god, those who believe in god, they'll ask you to prove that isn't a god, but you must not walk into that trap, don't try to prove that there isn't a god, don't try to prove that there isn't a god, it is like trying to prove that there is no such thing as Father Christmas If someone believes that there is a god, well let him prove it to you because after all we don't see one, hear one. At least personally I have not, I haven't seen gods heard god, and I have never felt any inclination to believe in god, I would require a lot of convincing. The natural state of the human being is not to believe in god. all right so if you don't believe in god, it is up to someone else to convince you, not up to you to convince them that there is no god. One can point out that millions of people through the centuries in the East have lived ethical spiritual lives, happy lives without any belief in god. so belief in god is at the least irrelevant. So it isn't a question of the Buddhist path against all others or that it is really better than other paths, When we speak of the path in Buddhism we mean just the path, that there is an Ultimate Reality and there is a way of getting there and that way of getting there is the Path or the Eightfold path of purification of Buddhism, that path seems to be-if one makes a comparative study, revealed more fully and clearly and perfectly in Buddhism than any other tradition or teaching so it is the Archetypal Path, the Principle Path that we are concerned with, not just a particular formulation, and this holds true with regard to say the Eightfold Path, sometimes the Path is explained as an Eightfold path, Sometimes as a threefold path, sila, samadhi, prajna; sometimes as a sevenfold path: as the seven stages of purification of beings, sometimes as the path of six, or ten Paramitas or the ten Bhumis of the Mahayana and so on .. So there are these different presentations and formulations, which help to make it clear that the path in principle is not just any one of them, it is just [198] The Path or process of the higher evolution of humanity. This is basically what we are concerned with. So Buddhism recognizes that there is such a path, if you like an Archetypal path, a Principal Path and Buddhism tries to reflect or to approximate to that.

Bob: Another question that arises in the same group is well if this is the right path you claim it to be why is it in 2,500 years it hasn't completely persuaded everybody, every human being on earth of its veracity. My father asked me that.

S: Well You could say the same thing to the Christians or to the Muslims. I mean you believe that your tradition is the truth. I mean in the case of Christians they believe in God, how is it that God has not seen to it that Christianity has covered the whole earth? After all you believe that if someone does not learn and follow the Christian religion you will go to hell, so how is it that God allows so many millions of people through the centuries to perish through not hearing his word. Is it their fault? Why did he not inspire missionaries to go forth over all the world, Or, even when they have gone, has everybody listened to them? Why is that? And the Christian will say, well, it is because of the hardness of their hearts. All right in the same way you can teach Buddhism but you cannot force people to listen. To me the whole question assumes that the people being taught or the people to whom the religion is being preached are passive, but they are not, they are free human beings so it is not a question of how is it that you Buddhists have not been sufficiently persuasive to convert the whole world this assumes that the whole world is passive and is waiting to hear the gospel from Buddhists, but it isn't passive. Individuals are capable of putting up strong resistance. And in fact even to think they could not or should not is to negate the very possibility of the spiritual life which depends upon the individual sense of freedom and self-responsibility. So one can persuade but one cannot force. And I believe there is a verse to this effect later on in this chapter: "You yourselves should make an effort, The Awakened ones are only teachers, they only show the Way" so this is the Buddhist point of view very strongly, we can only teach, we can only explain, we can only encourage, we can only try to inspire, but we realize as perhaps Christianity has never realized, that the spiritual life by its very nature cannot be forced upon any one. In the West, Christianity had a complete monopoly on religion for hundreds upon hundreds of years and look what happened. Look what the present situation is, that most people are ex-Christians in the West. Which is the strongest of all the Churches? The Roman Catholic Church. And recently there has been an interesting discussion in the newspapers because it has come to light that the prison population contains a percentage of Catholics out of all [199] relation to the percentage of Catholics in the total population. Catholics are, say, ten percent of the population of the country, but they make up about twenty-five percent of the population of the jails. Now why is that? They are your own people, they have been born and brought up as Catholics. How come that you have not been able to do a better job than that? So we should retort or retaliate in that sort of way.

Bob : In fact my father is a rationalist atheist rather than a Christian.

S: Well come to that, how is that bodies like the Humanists Association and the Secular Society have such tiny followings? In fact dwindling followings if anything. Why has not the whole world been converted to their views? So one cannot really argue in this way with regard to any teaching, and say well if what you believe is go good why hasn't it spread over the whole earth? Well no, this assumes that people are completely rational which they are not or that they are completely open minded, which they are not. Taking for granted that what you have to teach is completely rational itself. So, probably in Britain, the Buddhist movement is bigger than the humanist movement, very likely. So you can ask your father exactly the same question, how come atheistic humanism has not swept Britain like wild fire? If you just look in the pages of this or that magazine you will see humanist or secularist meetings announced, there are about four of them a week in the whole of Britain, something like that. I think they

have a summer school once a year, but just the FWBO has far more activities than they do. So you can turn it., these ideas have been around since at least the Renaissance, well they were around in Classical times, how come they have not converted the whole world? they have the media at their disposal, they have got influential exponents like Bertrand Russell and Julian Huxley, how come that these people didn't convert the world to their views, they didn't even do as well as John Wesley did in his day, they didn't even do as well as Billy Graham or someone like that. Then you have to acknowledge the presence of human choice. One could say that if one goes back to the period just before the industrial revolution, one finds that the level of civilization throughout the world was roughly the same, from the technological point of view. I mean Europe did not forge ahead of the rest of the world technologically before the seventeenth Century, until then they were pretty much abreast, but actually most parts of the East and Middle East were more civilized than was Europe, much less barbaric. So even after 1500 years of Christianity Europe was in a less civilized state than the East after longer or shorter periods of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and so on. Even accounts that we get of a country like say Burma, show it to have been a very civilized country, very very little [200] crime and a high level of culture of literacy and so on. So Buddhism did better in this area up until the time of the Industrial Revolution which completely distorted the picture than Christianity ever did in its and it is beginning to be recognized that, in the last decade or so for obvious reasons that Islamic countries before the industrial revolution had reached a very high level of civilization and culture. But the fact that Europe went ahead technologically and in Europe came the Industrial Revolution and the effects of that have now been felt all over the world, this has distorted the whole picture and especially as the technological advance had been equated with human progress. Against that background other parts of the world are viewed as backward, whereas actually they may be in all essential respects more civilized and more cultured. Any way we have got a little way from the text. "The best of paths is the Eightfold path, the best of truths the four noble truths" So in the same way one doesn't say that the Four Noble Truths are the best and true just because they happen to be Buddhist, so why does one say that? In what way are they the best Truths, these particular truths?

Mike: Because insight into them is conducive to liberation.

S: Yes, these truths represent the vision of the Aryas, the Truth which reveals the basic human situation, the existential situation and what one is to do about it. It elaborates on this theme of the Path, the First two truths show what the Path is leading from or out of and the second two reveal the Path itself and the Goal of the Path. "And best of conditions is passionlessness" Conditions here is dhammanan. The word dharma does by the way sometimes mean condition or mental state, not Truth of teaching. So Viraga, [?] the absence of passion is the best of all states. Here Viraga, which is one of the positive nidanas is used as a synonym say for Nirvana itself. Do you think this is a very good way of thinking of Nirvana, as passionlessness, or do you think there is a danger inherent in thinking of it in that sort of way?

Johnny: It has got a negative connotation to it, an absence of life, absence of emotion.

S: So what would be a better word?

Pete: Cravinglessness

S: That would still be negative though, wouldn't it.



Bob: Liberation.

S: Yes, because you are free from passion.

Clive: A state of creative passion.

Murray: dispassion

S: That is a bit tame though isn't it?

[201]

S: Why do you think the Buddha used this term, what sort of people could he safely use this term to?

Mike: Healthy pagans

S: Healthy pagans, yes.

Mark: People who were naturally passionate.

S: Yes or who had been.

Mike: People who needed to achieve a very healthy, calm, coming out of Abhaya's talk, I was remembering parts of the Iliad, they were just raging with passion throughout.

S: I personally get that impression from reading the Pali scriptures that people in those days were very much in contact with their pagan roots, it's not so much a question of pagan roots in their case, the roots supported fully grown trees, it was right there above the surface, not in the depths. So one needs to speak to people in the West perhaps more in terms of energy, inspiration and creativity, positive emotion and represent enlightenment as the culmination of this sort of process, the point of highest intensity of those sort of qualities, the apogee of those sort of qualities.

Bob: The Mahayana emphasizes the more positive aspects of Enlightenment does that mean that by the time the Mahayana had taken root that there weren't healthy pagans..

S: Well we mustn't forget that ... we usually think of Ancient India as a pretty static sort of place, actually all sorts of social and economic and political changes were going on, there were big cities in the Buddha's time, but subsequently urban life did increase very much, one could say that probably the Mahayana is to be seen against a rather more urban background than early Buddhism, that far more people had moved from the country side into the cities and it does seem from what little we know of history of that period that merchants for instance who did live in cities and travelled from city to city were the strongest supporters of Buddhism in that later period. There had been strong supporters in the early period but in the later period especially they seem to have been strong supporters, So perhaps certain emphasis appearing in the later Mahayana sutras and not unconnected. with the increasing urbanization of India, the increasing complexity of its civilizations, even the increasing complexity of its economic system, we mustn't forget those factors.

Murray: How big were these cities, do you know?

S: I don't really know, some of the commentaries, these are the commentaries on the Pali texts, the commentaries being of course much later than [202] texts themselves, speak in terms of incredibly large numbers like 30 million and 80 million, but this is quite out of the question. We don't really know, we only know that they did get bigger, that they were wealthy and prosperous and peace on the whole.

Bob: But has India always been poor and subject to famine and such like. Has it always been like that?

S: It certainly has been for many hundreds of years, we don't hear much

of those things in earlier periods, probably because the population was very much smaller. We do hear of famines during the Mogul period. Right. "Best of bipeds is the seeing one, the best of two legged beings, bipeds, dipadar, is the chakkhuma, literally it means the one with an eye. The one possessed of an eye, or if you like the seeing one or the man of vision. So what sort of statement is the Buddha making here? Well he is applying an evolutionary criterion, what is the best sort of human being? the one who has developed the eye of spiritual consciousness higher awareness, in other words Vision. There is no other criterion, the best human being is not the richest, or the most powerful, it is the one with insight, with vision, that is the best human being.

Bob: Interesting that he should just limit it at just to human beings, not to the best state, the best that a sentient being can achieve.

S: Well the biped is presumably the highest kind of being though you've got birds, birds are bipeds. that is why Plato talked of Man as the featherless biped.

Bob: But what about gods and higher realms?

S: well if gods are included amongst the bipeds it would still hold good. The seeing person, the enlightened person transcends even the gods.

v: The gods are bipeds?

S: Well if they are thought of as having feet or legs at all they are usually depicted as having two. I think it is beings on earth, creatures on earth that the verse has in mind. It is a common expression actually for human beings in Pali and Sanskrit. Human as opposed to animal, bipeds as opposed to quadrupeds, the best of human beings is the Seeing One is what it really means, the best kind of human being is the one who is Enlightened. The Buddha himself is sometimes termed Chakkhuma, this is one of the various epithets he is known by .

So through out this verse one is concerned with what is best and what does that suggest?

Mike: The path is to do with perfection.

S: Yes perfection in every situation, every context one should be concerned [203] with or one should look for what is the best. Can't be satisfied with the second best. Don't be satisfied

with the second rate, only the best is good enough in any situation.[I speak about any human situation] If it is a question of looking for a Path, let it be the best path, among Truths look for the best truths, among conditions aspire after the best of conditions and amongst human beings be on the look out for the best of human beings, aspire always to the best, don't be satisfied with anything less than that. Can you carry perfectionism too far?

Mike: If you call it an ism, but if you strive after perfection, probably not.

S: If you try to get the best out of everybody, everything in every sense. Supposing you are looking for a pair of shoes, should you actually go searching from shop to shop until you find the pair that is the best for you, if not why not?

Bob: Well it could not be the best use of your time.

S: Right there is also the question of priorities. You want the best order of priorities. You have to get that first. But the whole trend is to encourage one to aspire after excellence. But you do find people who spend a lot of time and trouble on comparatively insignificant and worthless things, trying to get them really right. But s isn't really worth the time and trouble. One must Know where to draw the line, where something is good enough.

Bob: It is a conflict we often have in the building team. (laughter)

S: I have heard that some people want to do some jobs to the highest possible standards, when from all that I can gather it isn't really required It is pot objectively required, but he wants to get things up to the highest possible standard for his own subjective satisfaction, which may be admirable in some ways but perhaps not in others.

Mike: I think in the long run the concrete example of the L and Q houses probably does wear people down in the end if they are always doing work which is only as good as is necessary but it is always subjectively to a slipshod standard.

Clive: I don't think so if they are committed enough to getting as much done as possible, then they are quite happy to do it to that standard, that is their priority.

Mike: It requires a certain degree of vision.

S: You don't think in terms of just that particular job that you are doing.

Murray: I think that one's relationship to one's spiritual teacher and [204] spiritual community is : nothing but the very best would do.

S: But again I make reservations because I can give you an example from my own experience. Some years ago it so happened I was really hungry and really needed a meal, so I had not had any thing all day, so I asked someone to prepare me a meal and they were very happy to do that, but I had to wait about four hours before it was ready because they thought well nothing but the best is good enough for Bhante, so they went and cooked a really good elaborate meal and wouldn't let me have a look in on it until it was all done, but by that time didn't feel like eating any more. I had wanted it there and then, I was hungry and I just wanted something simple, but he insisted on spending all those hours cooking a really magnificent meal which

by the time it was ready I didn't really want. So something ... they were thinking of the perfect meal in the abstract was the best possible meal without seeing the actual situation that I needed something within half an hour, or within fifteen minutes if possible.

Johnny: The perfect meal would have been an omelette.

S: Right, so it is the best in relation. So it is the same even in this, the matter of the building, the best sort of work in relation to what?

Mike: It's as though you really have this as it were abstract principle of striving for excellence and perfection, but every time you have to see the actual situation.

S: What does constitute excellence? Not allowing your concept of excellence to latch on to some quite narrow limited situation or just one aspect of the situation. You might say well before I start work I am going to have my tools perfectly sharpened, so you might spend the whole day doing that and never get around to doing any work. But they have just got to be sharp enough, not perfectly sharp.

Mike: That seems to be the realm of the neurotic.

S: Perhaps it does, yes.

Mike: Like the housewife who doesn't want a clean kitchen but one that sparkles.

S: Well yes, the house-wife is in some ways a good example. I mean I have known house-wives...

[end of side A]

...read their paper there in case they make it untidy, It is as though the house-wife has forgotten that the parlour or the living room or the front room is to be lived in, she has forgotten that, it is a sort of show place. She has forgotten that those chairs are to be sat on. Sometimes she thinks that that is the last thing that they are meant for. I even heard a woman say that [205] she doesn't like her husband to sit on the sofa because he disarranges the cushions.

Bob: It is quite common in Solihull in wealthy bourgeoisie people, it is quite common for people to keep the best room with the best furniture is only used when there are special guests.

S: Or they like taking little boys out on Sundays in their best clothes, It is the best for what purpose? Certainly not for running around and enjoying yourself in because once you are on you are to sit down quietly and not do anything or just walk along with father and mother. Your main preoccupation being not to get yourself dirty or untidy. I can remember as a child being taken out by my parents who were luckily not like that and met some friends of my father's on Wimbledon Common with their children and they were so dressed up that they weren't allowed to play. They had to sit and watch us play, they weren't allowed to play themselves in case they got their clothes dirty, so they were on Wimbledon Common only about 7,8,9 and having to quietly sit down on the ground, on something of course, by the side

of their mother and not play, so those clothes weren't the best from their point of view. One could see what they were thinking and feeling. So one cannot sort of decide the best in the abstract. One cannot say this is the best, the best for what? I mean the only best with regard to which one does not need to ask that is the Absolute itself. You cannot ask what is enlightenment for, what is the good of Enlightenment, there all questions cease. Enlightenment is that for the sake of which one engages in all the other things. so sometimes one wonders which is the best community, the best co-op, well best in what sense or on what grounds or for whom? ~A certain situation maybe a really good one and the best one for somebody else, it may not be the best one for you. None of those situations is the best absolutely. Right: next verse: 274

Text: "This is the only way. None other is there that leads to the Vision of the Pure. Enter upon this way, this is the bewilderment of

Mara".

S: So what is one to make of this expression: this is the only Way. Is one to see this so to speak in a sectarian sense, well you hear Christians telling you this in the only way, you have got to believe in Jesus so is it that, that Buddhism is the only way etc. etc.

Murray: Well it refers back to that passage out of the Canon where the Buddha says "Whatever leads to dispassion, whatever leads to frugality ... and so on, this is the Path this is the Way."

S: Right, the Eightfold path represents the sum total of those conditions [206] which have to be fulfilled if you are to gain Enlightenment. That is the only way to do it. You cannot gain enlightenment without getting rid of craving, you cannot get Enlightenment without getting rid of hatred, you cannot attain Enlightenment without developing spiritual insight. So this is to be understood in that way. That is the only way that you can do it. By developing all the positive nidanas, that is the only way.

Murray: It is also interesting that Buddhism, it is only Buddhism that enumerates the nidanas, it is only really in Buddhism that you have a really defined concept of Enlightenment. In a sense it seems to me it seems that Buddhism is quite literally the only way. I mean whenever I get into a discussion with people, they say "Oh, we've got that in our religion too" but it is always after you have mentioned it first.

S: Yes I remember an incidence of this sort very soon after I came back to England. I was invited up to a church in Hampstead, not to the Church itself, but to a sort of youth club run there. And I was invited to a discussion with Joseph McCulloch. He is quite a well known Christian. He is the vicar or rector of St Mary-le-Bow, I think. And he holds lunch time debates or discussions with various famous people. He has done this for years He debates with people like Muggeridge, Paul Johnson ... Anyway I didn't know about all that then, I was to have a discussion with him. So his line seems to be that whatever Buddhism taught, so did Christianity. So, I mentioned Karma, "oh yes, Christianity teaches Karma", so I mentioned rebirth because most Christians don't believe in Rebirth, "oh yes, Christianity teaches rebirth", so everything I mentioned he said that was in Christianity and Christianity taught it too. So in the end I came to the conclusion that he was a totally dishonest person and he was only concerned to cut the ground in discussion from under my feet. But I perceived that some of

the youngsters attending were really quite amused in a slightly cynical way at his sort of approach. They knew quite well that Christianity didn't teach Karma, Rebirth, but that was the ploy that he adopted. Hindus do this in India, anything that you mention, any description you give of Buddhism, "well that is in Hinduism too". They try to cut the ground from under your feet. Supposing you say that there is no compassion in Hinduism, "oh yes there is, just as much as in Buddhism itself". Well, if there is compassion in Hinduism, how is that you can treat Untouchables in the way that you do? "Well we treat them in the way we do out of compassion, out of compassion, they have been reborn as Untouchables due to their sins, so it is our duty to treat them in that way, so that they can expiate their sins and be reborn in a better condition next time". This is what they will say. You have to be very careful when arguing with Hindus, I wouldn't recommend any tyros to enter into an [207] argument. with caste Hindus, especially Brahmins, they are very clever subtle people.

Pete: Any?

S: Tyros, a beginner in Buddhism, who didn't have all the arguments as it were at his finger tips and a very quick mind at the same time.. No you would definitely get the worst of the argument.

Bob: Rajneesh the chap at the top is supposed to be in favour of the caste system because he argues that it helps the untouchables, or rather to abolish the caste system would give the untouchables more sense of ego than they have at the moment, in fact they are quite at an advantage by considering themselves low. They cannot live out an Ego identity.

Murray : That's why Rajneesh has a limousine, Rolls Royce etc.

S: Well if we look at the matter in terms in general evolutionary terms, we can see the answers quite easily.

Murray: Just before I left New Zealand, I kept running into a lot of Krishna followers, the Hare Krishna dance around the streets with bald heads banging drums and also the Hare Bolt?, that is the off-shoot and I seem to be bumping into them both, but both sects claimed that one that the Buddha's birth was predicted in the Vedas 5,000 BC and that it is in writing and there is a particular text that states that the Buddha is going to be born, the name of his family and so on and so forth and that on the basis of that the Buddha is a reincarnation of Vishnu, was born in order to bring ahimsa, non-violence, into the Hindu religion, because it was tending towards animal sacrifice and so forth and so Buddhism is in fact a branch of Hinduism and all its teachings go back to the Vedas.

S: This is what they say. By the Vedas one means the Four Vedas which they should mean, they usually invoke the Vedas without studying them, there are definitely no predictions of the coming of the Buddha. Of course sometimes they sort of play fast and loose, the Vedas have got what are called -?-attached to the Four Vedas you have got what they call Brochminas[?] that is to say a class of literature dealing mainly with Vedic rituals and attached to them you have got Upanishads, well there are quite a lot of Upanishads that are technically part of the Vedic literature, but were written hundreds and hundreds of years later right down into the Muslim period, if you were speaking very very loosely you could refer to that whole collection as the Vedas. In that vast literature, some post Buddhist, there might be a reference to the Buddha, predicting that there was going to be a Buddha, but not in the Four

Vedas, that is to say the -?- which are pre-Buddhist. [208] With regard to ahimsa, there is a Purana, I don't know whether you have heard of the Puranas, there is a class of sacred Hindu texts called the Puranas, eighteen in all, and there are eighteen Upapuranas or secondary Puranas, in one of these there is definitely mention of the Buddha, they are definitely post-Buddhist, and it is said that what happened was this: that the Veda prescribing certain rituals including animal sacrifice well it is said that the Asuras were not at all happy that so many people were performing sacrifices on earth according to the dictates of the Veda and thereby going to heaven and swelling the ranks of the gods. They weren't happy with that because it meant that the gods were multiplying and becoming stronger and the Asuras were becoming weaker. So one of the Asuras agreed to incarnate on earth and preach against animal sacrifice and say that it was wicked and preach Ahimsa. So one of the Asuras descended to earth in that way, there are various versions of this, some say that Vishnu did it out of mischief and that was the Buddha, so therefore they say, those who say that it was Vishnu who descended, he truly is an incarnation of Vishnu and therefore to be worshipped but his teaching was intended to deliberately to mislead and therefore should not be followed.

Mike: But why should Vishnu deliberately teach something misleading?

S: I may have got it a bit wrong. But they definitely say that the Buddha was Vishnu who was incarnated, at least some of them say that; let me think again. I think I have got it the wrong way round, no it was the Asuras became stronger because the Asuras started performing sacrifices, that's right, so the gods wanted to weaken the Asuras and therefore persuaded Vishnu to descend to earth and preach against sacrifices, that was the way round it was, so that the Asuras should be weakened. So Vishnu descended, was incarnated and preached Ahimsa in order to induce them to give up animal sacrifices and therefore weaken the Asuras. So therefore one should honour the Buddha as a true incarnation but not follow his teaching because it was intended to deceive the Asuras. In that way they can neatly say that they really do reverence the Buddha but they stick to their Hindu teaching.

Murray: And this particular text is post-Buddhist?

S: Yes, the Purana according to all scholars, including Hindu scholars, they are post-Buddhist.

Mike: It is really impossible to argue with most Indians in terms of data like this, because they date Indian texts so early, I mean that they claim that the Vedas are ten thousand years old and things like this.

S: Oh, much older than that, some of them, some of them push them back to a 100,000 BC [209] And they change their ground, one moment the Vedas are 34 books another moment Veda just means Knowledge, but anyway if they were referring to the Four Vedas then there is no prediction in them. I mean someone might be able to squeeze a prediction out of them but you can get anything out of the Vedas in that way. But if you just read the plain straight forward meaning there is no prediction.

Murray: Are the Puranas part of the Upanishads?

S: No, that is a different class of texts. In Hinduism there are three big main groups of literature, there are the Vedas and all the ancillary literature, the Brahmanas [?] and the

Upanishads and also the Vedanta sutras or Brahmana sutras which are a condensation of the Upanishadic teaching attributed to anaya? who is also supposed to be the author of the -?- and then the Bhagavad Gita which is inserted into the??, and that is regarded as a sort of essence of the Vedas, so it has a semi-canonical status, so that is the Vedic literature group broadly speaking.

Murray: The Bhagavad Gita is a post-Buddhistic teaching?

S: Yes it is, though a few Hindu scholars maintain that it isn't, but most agree that it is. And then you have got all the Puranas and the Upaparanas and then of course you've got the Hindu Tantras, there are these three big divisions in the literature. You could in a way class with the Puranas what they call the Ityhasaa[?], that is to say the??and the?? so it is quite a big literature. Though not as big as the Buddhist. So one really needs to know one's way around these things if one is talking with Hindus and they are completely uncritical in their attitude. They will argue from the basis well the Buddha must have got it all, everything from Hinduism because all the Vedas and Puranas and Upanishads existed before him. This is what a fundamentalist Hindu will maintain. This is completely untenable, even according to the modern Hindu scholarship . There are a few scholarly Hindus who are at the same time fundamentalists, just as there are some scholarly Christians who are Bible fundamentalists, like the Seventh Day Adventists.

Mike: with these sorts of people it is not possible to discuss anyhow, they are only interested in converting.

S: Well they are not even into converting in a way, if you see what I mean. I don't think one can really do much about orthodox people of this sort one just has to wait for the process of secularization to catch up with them.

Murray: It is like talking to a brick wall! These people were saying that [210] this was all coming from the Vedic literature...

S: Well you should always ask them to show you the verse because very often Hindus make this wild statement that it is in the Vedas but they never actually cite the verse, at least with Christians they will cite the verse, they know the Bible well and can show you the actual verse, but Hindus don't do that. So you should ask them to produce the book and say that you will believe it when you see it.

Mike: It will probably encourage them to forge a new class of Vedic literature.

Murray: I think the guy who started the Krishna religion this century he rewrote the Bhagavad Gita or he did a translation in which he did actually insert verses that were...

S: The Bhagavad Gita? In the Bhagavad Gita, the term Buddha in the sense of wise man is used, there is no doubt about that, but there is no reference to the historical Buddha. And the Bhagavad Gita is post-Buddhistic; some scholars like S M Dasgupta? maintain that it is influenced by Buddhism, that some of the better verses about yoga and so on reflect Buddhist influence.

Mike: What about the teaching of the eight limbs of yoga, do you think that that has been



influenced by Buddhism?

S: This is the opinion of S.M. Dasgupta that this Anga yoga [?] is influenced by Buddhism, for instance there is a reference to the four Brahma viharas in the Yoga sutras[?] They are only mentioned by name, there is no description of how to practise, but maitri, karuna mudita upeksha, this set of four positive states is mentioned, though there is not a word about how they are to be developed. But also it must be said that even in India at the Buddha's time there was a common fund of Yogic material on which all the different teachings drew to some extent, because much of this is concerned with mundane states, not with transcendental states, so the teaching of Ahimsa was known in India before the Buddha, there is no doubt about that. So some of these more positive elements already existed and the Buddha recognized this, it was not that he borrowed them as they like to say, or incorporated them, but he recognized that yes those factors are factors of the path, they are conditions of Enlightenment, It wasn't that people before were totally in the dark or that there was no spiritual culture whatever. The Jains it is well known had developed the doctrine of Ahimsa quite independently of the Buddha. They took it to extremes from a Buddhist point of view. So one has to as it were follow a middle path, one doesn't want to deny that there are some elements in the Buddha's teaching that are also found before the [211] Buddha, but on the other hand no path such as the Buddha's path was ever mapped out in say the Upanishads or any of the Vedic literature or by any of the previous teachers. You could say that there were painters before Michelangelo but you cannot say that Michelangelo borrowed from everything from them. So, "this is the only way, none other leads to the vision of the Pure'. What is this vision of the pure, this purity of vision? It is the vision of the Transcendental. "Enter upon this way, this is the bewilderment of Mara", what does that mean? First of all take it literally, why should Mara be bewildered when you enter upon the way, enter upon the Path?

Mark: Because you are leaving the terms of reference in which he operates,

S: Yes you are leaving Mara's world, Mara's kingdom. You are a traitor. Mara doesn't like to lose any of his subjects, so he is bewildered and confused when anybody starts escaping. So put it mythologically, what would it mean?

Murray: Initially when you enter upon the path you do go through a period of confusion because you are leaving old values behind and you are adopting new values.

S: But it is Mara who is confused and bewildered. so that suggests that when you enter upon the Way then that spreads confusion to all that is negative in you because everything that is negative in you is being defeated and thrown back. Mara has lost that particular round at least,

Murray: I was discussing Prajna, and compassion when we were talking about the three levels of Prajna and there were two questions that arose. The first was, is the prajna that arises intuitively always transcendental insight and the second was...

S: When you say intuitive, you mean the third kind as a result of meditation?

Murray: Yes ... and in order to become a stream entrant is there anything that we can do to speed up the process apart from what we are doing now?

S: Well with regard to the first question, yes, that wisdom is always transcendental, that ... it

is a synonym for transcendental wisdom, but that is not to say that every reflection that arises while you are in a meditative mood is an insight or represents that wisdom. When bhavanamayi-prajna is spoken about in that context it means Transcendental Wisdom. It does not mean any sort of reflection that arises in a meditative mood. Such reflections can arise though without amounting to insight or wisdom in that sense.

Murray: Transcendental insight is not necessarily synonymous with the insight of a Stream entrant?

[212]

S: It can be higher, there is the Transcendental insight of the Once Returner, the Non-Returner, the Arhant. Usually it is said that in the Theravada that that insight arises by reflecting on or reviewing the imperfections of the previous preceding state, that is to say the [?] state.

Murray: It can be also lower as well?

S: In what sense?

Murray: Well to have transcendental insight doesn't immediately mean that you are a stream entrant?

S: Well it depends upon the intensity or the strength; if that Transcendental Insight is strong enough to break the first three fetters then you become a stream entrant, that is the criteria. But in a way it is a sort of artificial question whether insight that falls short of that is really insight? You need a sufficient accumulation of that insight on the basis of meditation before it becomes strong enough to break the first three fetters then that is known as Transcendental Insight, whether the insight at the moment before the fetters are actually broken is really insight in the transcendental sense is a sort of academic question. Somewhere in the Sarvastivada they introduced the term ghotrabu to cover that sort of phase of neither mundane nor transcendental so to speak.

Mark: It's as much the strength of the insight, there might be elements of the transcendental but it is not strong enough to break through the fetters

S: Yes

Murray: The other thing that we were talking about was if there is actually anything that we can do to speed up the process apart from what we are doing in terms of the FWBO now?

S: I cannot think of anything. Meditation mainly, more meditation would help, but you need to get yourself into a state which you can usefully do more meditation without it as it were back-firing on you. You all agree that if you could just go on meditating for twelve hours a day, well in the course of time, a few years, you'd probably be certain to gain stream entry, but are you able to meditate in that way? So then it becomes a question of preparing yourself to be able to meditate in that way.

Murray: How would it back-fire?

S: Well you could sit there and try to meditate, your knees would give way or you'd feel very blocked or you would get thoroughly bored or you would experience a violent reaction against it and just wouldn't be able to do it. You cannot just force yourself to do it, just out of a rational [213] understanding that that would be a good thing to do.

Pete: I have heard it said that you had said, that there was nobody in the Friends who was ready for that quantity of meditation. Does that hold true? Or was that a long time ago?

S: I am not sure how long ago that was, but I think that very few people in the Friends have a natural aptitude for meditation, able to get on with it easily.

Pete: When you say natural aptitude, what does that exactly mean?

S: Well, that they enjoy meditation.

Pete: I have heard this said about people that they are natural meditators, and they do seem to be able to sit there for a long time and they say that they enjoy their meditations, but this seems to conflict with the idea that you have to be in an ethical frame of mind and all that sort of thing.

S: Well you do to be able really to concentrate and really mobilize all your energies and bring them all together.

Pete: It does seem that there are two things though, there's people who haven't sorted all that out but are quite good at meditation

S: Well probably they are good as long as the meditation is confined to quite short periods. If they were to try to meditate for very much longer they would probably encounter strong resistance from those other parts of their being. I mean Kamalasila seems to have a natural liking for meditation and he wants to do more and more. He's not happy spending too much time on administration and Prakasha seems to be able to get into it quite easily and there others like that. I think that someone who is a natural meditator is usually one who isn't over active mentally, who is not mentally distracted and also who has a reasonable amount of positive emotion and no outstanding psychological problems and hang-ups. In other words the natural meditator is the healthy human being, healthy happy human being. You know, and obviously he must have some higher spiritual ideal to provide him with the motivation for meditation at all.

Mike: Don't you feel that the practice, the attempt to practise meditation, practising it for a short period can help make one more ethical can help one be ethical and help as part of the process of clearing up these difficulties and obstructions.

S: It can if they are just a result of simple misunderstandings, for instance if you have been engaged in violent exercise and then you try to meditate and you find out you can't, well then you just realize that [214] in a common sense sort of way that well "if I want to meditate more then I must not engage in so much violent exercise at least not immediately before meditating". People will also find that if they engage in sex too soon before meditation then that affects the meditation, well all right so they curtail that sort of activity in a common sense sort of way ... this reminds me of something which Kamalasila said in a letter that I had from

him this morning and he has put a couple of questions for the question and answer meeting, but the background to the questions is interesting, he says that he gets the feeling that there is a sort of micchaditthi about that what people really need to do is to experience their sort of ape man, ape side more to get in touch with their crude energies and he says while he is not disputing that he gets the impression that people think that this means that they cannot get into meditation for the time being. So he is wondering about that, whether in fact that is so.

Clive to talk about apeman, it is a bit sick, to talk about it so much anyway.

Mike: You mean rather than doing it.

Murray: I really enjoyed Nagabodhi's and Mangala's talks last night because they put that perspective back on to it -?- operational concepts, there is a wasteland in India but there is wasteland in the West too. That we may have to develop the dakini and the angel but the next step is obvious, it is obvious what we have got to do just make a cup of tea, go to the toilet or go to the next meditation session.

S: I don't see the one excluding the other, it is not that you have to concentrate on getting in touch with your cruder energies and therefore have to neglect meditation.

Bob: In terms of the ladder you mentioned if there are bits of you, if you can look at it like this, bits of you on rung 4 another on rung 30 another on rung 20, is one trying to move from rung 4 to 5, 20 to 21, 30 to 31, as it were simultaneously?

S: Yes one is, rather like for instance supposing you are studying a number of different subjects, supposing you studying for the sake of argument biology, trigonometry, Spanish a number of different subjects, well you can be well on with regard with one and not so well on with regard to another. So you can keep them all going simultaneously, in the sense that now you have done a bit of trigonometry wherever you are in that particular subject, then you study a bit of Spanish whenever you are in that particular subject. And you apportion your time as you think best, in the same way you may recognize that you are well developed emotionally but not intellectually, so when you work on your emotions, well you are [215] working from a position of a bit further on, working on your intellect from a position a bit further back, but you have to decide overall what you are going to work on: all of them equally or whether you are going to work on those which are less developed, because in principle you are working on all of them all the time to some extent.

Pete: It seems that you should be trying to balance them up within the spiritual context anyway.

S: Yes, ultimately you have to balance them but you need not stop working on something that is well developed just because it is well developed.

Pete: In a way that could be where you get your confidence.

S: But you should be very careful not to operate simply in those areas or with those faculties where you are well experienced and developed because they give you confidence and avoid the other areas because there you lack confidence and you don't want to feel your lack of confidence.

Clive: How do you define an intellectual faculty? It is obviously not intellectual knowledge, you know like you were talking about some people in India despite their lack of education some of them were intellectual and very acute.

S: Well you see, I think I used the word intelligent, but in modern times in this country amongst those using of the English language, for various reasons there is complete confusion of terminology. We use the word intellect but what on earth do we mean by it, usually nobody knows. Even intelligence is a bit vague so what are we actually talking about? This really needs to be understood. Usually or at least a definition of intelligence is "the creative use of concepts" the concepts are used, concepts being abstract ideas very often but they are used creatively, they are used in the interests of the individual life and work and development. They are not used just as counters, they are not taken as representing something fixed and unchanging.

Clive: What about intellect?

S: Intellect originally had a precise meaning in Latin, it meant a sort of higher supra-personal faculty of apprehension of Truth. But that is the scholastic sort of definition, scholastic Western philosophy, but we don't use at all in that sense, now usually it means the alienated intelligence. You use concepts for their own sake, you take concepts as an end in themselves and you manipulate them being entirely out of contact with your feelings or emotions, or virtually out of contact.

Pete: I seem to remember in "Wisdom beyond Words" you actually used 'intellect' in that second way and later on you reversed to using it in the [216] first of the two ways, which way do...

S: Well sometimes I say that if one uses it in a more ancient traditional way positively then it should have a capital I to make sure that that is the sense in which you are using it. Because it can mean contradictory things depending upon the sense of the term. For instance supposing you said that "Truth is to be apprehended by the Intellect". Well if you say intellect in the first sense well that is understandable, a higher supra-personal faculty, but if you use it in the second sense with a small i it means the alienated intelligence, and that is clearly wrong.

Pete: Is there any relation between those two faculties?

S: Well yes and no. Is there any relation between say the alienated human being and the remaining humanity in him? Well clearly there is. They are parts of the same whole. But they are not integrated.

Mike: Your definition of intelligence ...

S: It is not an original one, it is one that I have read somewhere.

M : I'd actually question it, that sounds too positive almost in contrast to the way that I feel that it is usually used. I feel that intelligence, the way that it is normally used in the West, tries to rule out or at least minimize this quantity of creativity in it, that often it is the ability to understand concepts and rather than use them creatively. That say that is the most common way that it is used in school .

S: Yes like in the intelligence test.

Murray: That is the difference between an intellectual and a scholar, the scholar has the element of creativity.

S: Not necessarily. Usually a scholar is one who is well acquainted with the sources and the texts and so on, he may have an creative element but not necessarily.

Mike: At his worst he is a technician of knowledge.

S: Yes, but if you read a book written by someone who has real intelligence that is to say who using the

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End of Tape 11.

S: ...who has really uses the concepts mechanically. I wouldn't say that there is no emotional element there, there is but it entirely unconscious. I have touched on this before, many scholars that I have met are highly emotional people but their emotionality comes into their work in an underground sort of way, a dishonest way, it is not openly admitted into it. I mean for instance a scholar might be accumulating evidence to refute somebody else's theory but it may not be a disinterested search for truth he may be having experiences of intense rivalry with that other scholar and want to discredit his discoveries at any cost. That is what is motivating him but he pretends on the surface that, or he might even believe that he has a disinterested search for truth and for Knowledge, but there is an appearance of objectivity and rationality and partiality but at the same time the whole material is definitely slanted and influenced by these underlying emotional attitudes, that happens all the time. He doesn't start off his book by saying Prof. So and So I hate your guts and I'm going to go all out by fair means or foul to do you down in the scholastic world, he doesn't say that, but that actually is what he is trying to do. This was quite an eye-opener in my earlier days which I have mentioned more than once, to encounter some of these scholars and hear the things they said about one another. It was so clear, the intense jealousies, it was amazing. So it is not that the emotional is absent but that it is entirely unacknowledged and largely negative and illegitimate one might say. You see Blake went into this whole question of what he called Reason and Energy. It is as though what he called Reason is the expression of just one limited part of oneself, the danger is that it takes over or tries to take over the whole. For instance the genuine Reason is that aspect of oneself which can examine the facts and draw conclusions and forecast the future and see what you ought to do in the light of certain possible consequences, this is all Reason, but that is not the whole of one's life, but if Reason tries to take over then your whole life becomes something calculated and worked out and therefore limited and conditioned and this is what Blake was protesting against.

Mike: I think one of the worst things about Reason is that it doesn't even work in its own terms, you say that its calculated and worked out but it always breaks down and fails to work out because it is stomping on the irrational side always.

S: So sometimes you find that somebody is very rational on the surface, very logical but the irrational is always breaking through, but it is not being acknowledged, the person tries to present that as itself rational, is rational, this is what we call rationalization, the irrational

being presented as rational. You have a compulsion to present your [218] irrationality as rationality. You won't admit that it is your irrationality, you want to maintain that it is rational, so you maintain that you are doing such and such for a definite logical entirely justifiable reason and therefore every one has got to accept that and acknowledge that whereas the truth may be that you are motivated by entirely irrational impulse perhaps of a highly negative character.

Pete: Sometimes when I am talking to somebody I feel disinclined to actually ask them why they are doing something but you are only going to make them think of a rationalization rather than just accept the fact that they want to do that.

S: Right. Sometimes one doesn't know why one wants to do something. Somebody was saying to me the other day, one of the Order members, "I know I ought to want more study, meditation I know that but actually my feeling is that I don't want more of that, I want more of something else, I don't know what it is" so he acknowledged that irrationality, he didn't try to say well I have come to the conclusion objectively and logically I ought not to do quite so much study and meditation, not that, but my rationality tells me that I ought to do more but my irrationality is not interested it wants to do something else, so that is the more honest position. There is sometimes a conflict. and you have in the long run to do justice to both, to your rational and irrational. The irrational is not anti-rational, it doesn't contradict the rational on its own level but it is certainly very different from it. OK. Verse 275:

"Walking this way you make an end of suffering, This is the way made known by me when I had learnt to remove all darts".

S: Walking this way you shall make an end of suffering. Well this is an affirmation of the four noble truths, suffering is mentioned, the way is mentioned and the end of suffering is mentioned. This is the way made known by me when I had learnt to remove all darts. What is interesting about this particular statement of the Buddha?

Murray: Removing all the darts.

S: That refers to suffering, a metaphorical expression for suffering. Sometimes in early Pali texts you get this, the darts of suffering. so this is the way made known by me when I had learnt to remove all darts. When I myself had transcended suffering then I made known the way. So what does this tell us about the Buddha and about his teaching?

Murray: It is creative learning process, he learnt through removing the darts. He didn't have God remove them for him.

S: He is speaking out of his own experience. When he says [219] that suffering is transcended, when craving is eliminated and while experience is bliss he is speaking from his own experience, so the whole of the Buddha's teaching is in one way or another indirectly or directly is an expression of what he himself has personally experienced or realized. So there is a lesson for us also here in that it reminds that talking to people about the Dharma it is very important to keep in close contact with our actual experience, it doesn't matter if we cannot talk about Nirvana or Enlightenment because we haven't attained that but what we can talk about because -we are in touch with it and experiencing it is our own experience of or is the process of growth and development itself. We can genuinely say well yes I am growing I am

developing and why?, because am living in such and such a way and because I am doing this and I am not doing that. That is my experience that I am growing, that am developing, I am not the person I was a year ago, or two years ago or three years ago. This one can certainly talk about with confidence because this is what one has experienced. So if you are talking to people, anyone outside the movement about Buddhism or about the FWBO what you should be basically talking about is the path, or the principle of the path that is to say growth and development and to the extent that you yourself have an experience of growth and development to that extent you can talk about the path successfully and with conviction. If for instance you have a problem with smoking but you are able to overcome that, give up smoking, you can talk about that. Or if you have a problem with anger or if you have a problem with neurotic dependency with father figures or you had a problem with concentration; or you need not talk in terms of problems at all. Growth doesn't consist of simply resolving the problems; if you found that you became progressively more and more positive emotionally you can talk about that, if you became more and more happy you can talk about that if you feel more and more light you can talk about that. If you feel that you understand things better you can talk about that, but what you need to communicate is the fact that you are a living growing human being and this is why, you don't really need to communicate anything more than that.

Bob: Except you are not really communicating the spiritual values, it is just the psychological . And a lot of what one feels people get out of

meditation say could probably, some of it be got from analysts and if you put too much emphasis on that it seems like all you are talking about is an alternative to an expensive analyst.

S: It depends to whom you are speaking. But also there is the point that growth and development in Buddhism is not just confined to the psychological or to the level with which modern psychoanalysis is familiar, it goes far [220] beyond that, but you must make that clear too. If somebody says for instance, well what you are talking about is just what my encounter group leader talks about, then you have to make clear well yes up to a point, but it goes much further than that. You can perhaps point out that even the encounter group leader has problems. I've noticed in the past when I have been leading retreats, especially when taking communication exercises that the people who have most difficulty with these things are the people who come to us from encounter groups, and even leaders of encounter groups, they are the people who have the most difficulty. I remember one occasion in particular when the leader of a quite a well known encounter group in London came along to a communication class which I held in a hall one Sunday afternoon and he was so disturbed after ten minutes that he had to leave and another person like that from Scientology came on a retreat and he said that he had done something like the communication exercises before and he thought he knew all about it, but after ten minutes he felt so uncomfortable he too, he just left the whole retreat he couldn't take it. I noticed that he was particularly rigid and glassy eyed and he seemed to think that practising communication was staring hard at the other person and the other person was fortunately quite well versed in communication exercises and wouldn't let him get away with it and just looked at him really directly and openly and he couldn't take it. We didn't see either of them again. Hence that little aphorism in 'Peace is a Fire' - "you must not relate to a neurotic person on the basis of their neurosis." It is very much like that. And I remember when I was in Holland I was talking with Vajrayogini, this was some years ago, I went to her when I was leading for a few days a retreat until I fell ill and quite a few friends of



hers from the growth movement in Holland were there and we were talking over certain aspects of the whole experience afterwards and she made the point that she was getting a bit worried because she was holding training courses for Gestalt therapy leaders and originally these were meant for those who had been working with her in Gestalt therapy for some years and who were quite experienced and wanted to set up as teachers so she was holding these courses. But then so many people wanted to join these courses, Gestalt therapy leader courses from outside, that is to say people wanted to come straight in and wanted to be trained as leaders before they had ever been followers as it were. And she was actually getting some of those kind of people in and she was not too happy with them, so we talked about it and it was quite clear that it was a class of people who just want to learn as many techniques as possible and operate them and effect people and even help people without ever practising themselves these techniques or being personally involved in the practise of Gestalt therapy as applied to themselves. Like a doctor who doesn't bother about his own health or look after his own health but is curing other people, rather like that although it is in some ways rather [221] different of course and a much worse situation because actually a Dr who neglects himself can very often cure other people but a therapist of that sort who in a sense doesn't believe in his own therapy cannot really do much for other people. It would seem sometimes that they don't really believe that they need any therapy, that they are OK and I have also found within the field of Buddhism some of the teachers of the so called Vipassana meditation operate in that sort of way too. They learn the technique which is quite powerful and they just set about teaching it and in some cases I notice these people seem to have a bit of a thing about power over others, it is as though they want to exercise power over others and almost enjoy sort of reducing them to a broken down state as sometimes happens, they got a kick out of doing this, I saw this very clearly.

Murray: Even on a positive level like being around the Friends you are just one of a lot of positive people but then if you go into, go to see some old friends or something and you suddenly find that you are the most together person there and in a sense it is quite attractive, it is quite alluring to them...

S: Ah, if you are just a bit more healthy and positive and dynamic than others it is a great temptation to just gather around you your own little group. You become quite magnetic.

Murray: And you can even feed off the energy as it were, which means you are a bit like a parasite.

S: Or a vampire you could say, yes. You keep yourself going with other people's energies instead of as it were giving them fresh energy, so this is something that needs to be watched very carefully. Any way we got to that from speaking from one's own experience, especially one's own experience of the path, even though you might have experienced a very elementary, limited section of the path, but speak mainly from your knowledge of that and then you can certainly communicate with people.

Andy: Isn't it said that you may have psychological growth but that would not be spiritual growth, but in a sense if you become happy and calm and? that is a higher level of consciousness and therefore it is spiritual growth?

Bob: Yes I would say that, it was more that Bhante was putting across the idea well if your experience is that you have given up smoking and you sleep better if that is what you

emphasize to somebody as the benefits of the path it lacks a dimension that ...

S: Yes, but it does depend to whom you are speaking. But if possible one should certainly leave no doubt in that person's mind that the Buddhist path goes far beyond

any growth and development envisaged simply by the [222] growth movement and the psycho-therapists, that might not be easy because to some extent they use the same terminology, but they use it in a different sort of way, with a quite limited connotation, they also speak of growth but they think of growth as something that goes up to a certain point, whereas we think of it as a process that continues far, far beyond that point.

Andy: Is psychological growth, growth up to a certain extent and spiritual growth is growth after that?

S: Ah well it is a question of terminology. In a sense it is all psychological, in a sense, but what is psychological, it is that which pertains to the psyche, what pertains to the mind, so higher levels of consciousness or mental states as distinct from physical states, so in a way it is all psychological literally speaking. But then in the West the way we use psychological, the connotation of psychological is actually very limited. So if you say well a psychological state you will usually think of a state of some kind of greed hatred or delusion or a more refined form of that, you won't think that the psychological included say the meditative states which also are states of consciousness, therefore mental or psychological, so we add these terms spiritual and transcendental to make it clear that those states transcend the connotation of the term psychological as when used in ordinary speech. You have to bear in mind not only the denotation of a word but the connotation as well for particular people in a particular context.

Andy: So these therapy groups train you to be better at being greedy?

S: Well yes it almost amounts to that, sometimes. So for them the word psychological has a restricted connotation so even though psychological means anything that pertains to the psyche, the denotation is that, the connotation is different. You understand this distinction of denotation of and connotation? This is a logical distinction. A denotation means the literal meaning of a word, but a connotation is all the associated meanings which are not part of the denotative literal meaning, so the denotation of psychological is the science of the psyche, the science of the mind, it doesn't say mundane mind, it doesn't say transcendental mind, it just says mind, science of the mind, so a psychological state is a mental state according to the denotation, but the connotation is determined by the cultural context. And, as if you use the word psychological people think of quite ordinary mental states, they don't think of enlightened mental states, so for us the word psychological has got a limited meaning and we have to make it clear that for Buddhism if we use the word psychological at all, it has a much more extensive connotation, so we make that perfectly clear by adding other words on, words like spiritual and transcendental [223] though according to the denotation of the word psychological we don't really need to do so. So the Buddha speaks from experience and so should we or at least we shouldn't stray too far from our experience. It is very difficult to communicate unless you speak from experience, but it must be real experience; for instance a Jehovah's Witness might say "I speak from experience. I know that Jesus is my saviour", what would you say to that? (laughter)

Andy: I say that "you've managed to contact that part of your psyche which you assume is

outside of yourself"

Mike: "Try the other doorbell"

S: Well they don't know, they have a strong feeling, it is a feeling masquerading as knowledge. This happens even within the Buddhist context, even within the Friends. Someone says "I know that he is not very happy" you don't that is just your feeling, which may be wrong. You don't know. And very often people confuse these two. And sometimes, in a slightly different way, people take their feelings as possessing ultimate validity. Well I feel such and such, therefore it is so". I think this is a bit dishonest sometimes because if you say "I know" well clearly that is an intellectual rational term and it can be challenged, how do you know, what are your reasons? whereas if you say feeling it is subjective and it cannot be challenged. But they use the word feeling to avoid the challenge and they use it illegitimately because what they are really trying put across is that they know something. For instance I had an experience some months ago. Somebody told somebody else that he felt that I was angry with him, that he had been to see me, had a short interview and he felt that I was angry with him, though of course I hadn't said so. So this was eventually relayed to me and I said no, I didn't feel any anger, I wasn't angry with that person at all. So of course there had to be elaborate explanations as why this person 'felt' i.e. 'knew' that I was angry when in fact apparently I wasn't or at least I didn't admit it. etc. etc. so this is quite a dishonest procedure or manoeuvre because you use the language of feeling to escape the process of verification which would arise or come into question if you used the language of knowledge, and I see a lot of this around the Friends, "Oh I get the feeling, oh I get the impression that" and this is supposed to be taken as gospel, as though you knew. You can say "I feel uncomfortable," well that is all right, you feel uncomfortable, that is your own feeling, but you cannot say that I feel that 2 and 2 make 5, but this is in fact what people do. or I feel that you have got something against me, oh no I haven't no, oh I think you must have because I feel it, I feel that you have something against me and then you say, no I haven't then they say, well you cannot be conscious of it, its blocked, you're [224] blocked, you are not in touch with it, you have got to get in touch with that feeling of antagonism that you have got towards me. I pick up on it. (laughter) But they cannot produce a single objective proof that you spoke angrily to them or that you ignored them, no it is just out of the blue, they feel that you have got something against them, in the end they say you won't admit it, you are not being honest, you are not being straight forward, I cannot communicate with you, you won't communicate with me, and this is what happens I'm afraid time and time again, so we have to be so careful not to present this pseudo Knowledge in this sort of way, in terms of feeling because you cannot question someone's feelings. But ...

Pete: But surely there is a situation where you have no rational ground for something...

S: Oh yes this is true, but you cannot expect the other person to accept that, unless they have got great confidence in you as a result of experience, if they really know you and they know from experience that you pick up on things which are very subtle, which they are not able to, well they may trust you, but you cannot say that you feel something but if you are unable to adduce any supporting arguments expect the other person to accept it as gospel just because you feel it. Why should he accept your feeling any more than you accept his? If he says to you: "I feel that you have got something against me", well you can say: "I feel that you have got an entirely subjective motive for saying that", it is one feeling against another. You cannot argue where feelings are concerned but you can argue where reason is concerned.

When you bring reason into it, well "I think that you have got something against me for such and such reason" well that can be discussed, but feelings cannot be discussed, so feelings ought not to be adduced in support of something which is seen as objective fact.

Mike: The difference is between say the initiating a discussion and contact someone with a statement based on intuition on the one hand and on the other hand is setting up feelings as certain axioms which cannot be challenged because they are axioms.

S: Yes indeed, and a lot of this thing goes on I am afraid. It is people's fear of logical thought, their fear of being questioned, their fear of being challenged. But if it is all put in subjective feeling terms, it is in a sense made impregnable and if the other person cannot see the trick that is being played, well they are just at a loss. Especially when the other person says strongly "I feel it", well you start wondering well perhaps he is right, maybe I have got something against him that I am not conscious of".

Murray: There is another one like that, where somebody says "you are not [225] sensitive to me, you are completely selfish, all you think of is yourself and why aren't you being more sensitive" and the implication is that you should organize yourself around the other person's sensitivities which basically means that they are being selfish. And I have always found in that situation if I say anything it just geometrically fragments and gets more and more tangled up.

Clive: Intuition, you know people say that "I trust my intuition",,,

S: You can trust your intuition, that is all right, if you want but you mustn't demand that another person trust your intuition. If you know him very well and you know from experience that his intuition can be trusted he won't need to demand or insist that and if he says something you will just accept that, and you won't demand that it be rationally proved to you because your knowledge and experience of that person is such. But if someone who you don't particularly know or in whom you don't have any particular trust or confidence because you have no experience of him comes along and says well this is what I feel and purely because he feels it you are asked to accept it, well that is not an acceptable situation.

Mike: I think there is another class too, there are persons who you know that you can trust their intuition but often there is something else lacking and the case that springs to mind is that there is a yoga teacher, a very good one outside the Friends, and she is extremely intuitive and basically everyone would agree that her flashes of intuition are right on, but it is as if she lacks any metta, lacks any sort of mundane insight even, so she will often make these revelations to the wrong people at the wrong time and just reduce them to tears rather than,, it is just not constructive because of that.

S: Ah, mm.

Clive: how do you know when somebody says,. well I feel it myself sometimes ... I am not sure what is intuition and what is some kind of reaction that I am not quite conscious of.

S: Well if one isn't sure then one must be very cautious in imposing that on another person, you can even say to that person, "look I have got a feeling that you have got something against me, is it true, have you got something against me?" and if the chap says "well no I

don't think that I have," then you say "maybe I was wrong", just like that, but not insist that you have got the feeling and therefore your opinion must be accepted taking your feeling as objective evidence of something and sometimes people who feel very strongly and attach great importance to their feeling operate very powerfully in this sort of way. "I feel it", well, you think if they feel it, it must be there. and you start doubting your own experience and that is the worst thing that you can do. So be very careful about saying [226] to people, especially when you are Order members, be very careful about saying to Mitras or Friends oh I feel that you are blocked or I feel that there is something negative in your attitude" that is a very dangerous sort of thing to say. Or "I feel that you should go away and meditate. You are not giving any reason. but "I just feel that you ought to do that" but that is not good enough. You may be right, I am not excluding that possibility, but you cannot reasonably expect the person to accept that unless he knows you very well from his experience. You have got to justify your feeling, even your correct feeling to him in rational terms. If you cannot do that. well you mustn't be upset if he cannot accept it.

Clive: I think some people actually try to undermine your argument by always sort of "I am not quite sure if that is right, I feel that there is something more to it than that". I think you are coming from a different direction, or something like this implying that they are in touch with their emotions and you are not...

S: But they never come right out into the open and offer any objective qualifications to what you are saying.

Mike: My experience of the more skilled senior Order members who have especially helped me is that they have never told me that I was blocked which was probably true, that I was out of touch, which was probably true and they just helped me in a way that got me in touch with that, rather than making declarations which...

v: or they'll say something which is really appropriate at the time like "well maybe you've got to go and work on relationships"

S: Or if one is being more skilful, say if one has the time, one doesn't say "Oh you have got to start working on your relationships", say, but you start relating to them. In the same way if you see that someone has got a communications problem you don't go up to them and say "I think you have got a communications problem, you ought to do something about it, you don't mention it, you say look it is a nice day, let's go for a walk and a chat, you initiate the process of communication, you don't tell him that he cannot communicate. You just start involving him in the process of communication.

Clive: It is too easy to do the other.

Bob: There is another side to the coin though. When my ordination was discussed, people had various things to say about it which I had had no indication about at all before. And I felt a bit annoyed about that, that they hadn't come up and told me such and such.

Clive: There is a line to be drawn, on the one hand people are so indirect that you completely miss: the point of what they are saying and also they are so direct that it shatters you beyond repair.

S: Even if they hadn't told you such and such is wrong with you or such [227] and such is what you have to do, on reflection it should have been obvious to you that they had been trying to do something about that with you. But if on the one hand neither had they said anything nor had they as far as you could see being actually trying to do anything about it with you then obviously then one would feel annoyed.

Mike: It seems that is part of the importance of having kalyana mitras whether official or not. They are special people with special relationship and extra channel of power in a positive sense a concentration so that all this really gets funnelled through to you and back again

S: And funnelled through to you in a positive way through people who you trust and have a positive relationship with.

Clive: Did you think that those people had actually been trying to work on those things with you more skilfully but you just hadn't recognized it.?

Bob: Oh no, the people I was in communication with had on the whole told me personally and indicated what the meeting said, it was more people who had formed an impression of me from afar,... maybe from the co-op or community but not actually..

S: So it does to remind us that in dealing with or in handling human beings we have to be very careful, it is quite easy to upset them. even with the best intentions.

Bob: When I had calmed down ..(laughter) and pieced together my shattered life I realized that there were loads of people around the LBC, say, who on knowing no better than some of these Order members had known me, that I had an opinion of them, such and such about that person...

S: this is why one has to be so careful in making sweeping judgements. You can say well I don't know him very well and from a distance I have a such and such impression, that is fair enough, but if you have only very slight contact and you have only met him once or twice, maybe not talked to him at all, and on the basis of that make a very confident statement about him, he is like this or like that, that is all wrong. And sometimes the more you get to know somebody the more you're confidence that you can say anything about them at all dwindles, when you see how complicated they are, how contradictory, how they change from time to time. Then you are quite puzzled about what you can say about them at all. Whether they are optimistic or pessimistic, whether they are committed or uncommitted, integrated or unintegrated or lazy or hard working, You just know because at different times they are all these things. So it becomes more and more difficult to say just a few succinct words about them that sum up their characters.

Clive: With enough knowledge of them you can usually predict what the situation they are likely to be what ...

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S: Provided it is not an unfamiliar situation, provided it resembles to some extent the situations of the past. Whereas I have noticed that sometimes people behave in a new situation in an entirely unpredictable way, for better or for worse. Some people really disappoint you, but others really surprise you in a very pleasant way. So it is not easy, as I

have said again and again, it is not easy to understand other human beings and therefore if one is called to say anything about them, it should be with great consideration and maybe many reservations, recognizing the limitations of one's own point of view and one's own point of knowledge of that person. I really am surprised sometimes by the really sweeping statements that I hear from different people about other people. And one might say that even god, if there was a god, could hardly be justified in speaking with such confidence, even if he had created them, (laughter) ...

End of side A

Clive: Do some people pigeon-hole something as quickly as possible in order to give themselves a sense of security

S: I am not quite sure why they do it, but they do it and as you say as quickly as possible sometimes.

Clive: Doesn't it stem from a sense of wanting to have some ground and projecting that on to other people in order to give oneself a sense of having ground by having a fixed idea of people around you,...

S: Well that would be in that case an extension of just one's general desire to have a fixed idea about everything, but I think it is more than that. I think it is in a way, to put it very crudely, it is a way of keeping other people down, it is not just pigeon-holing them, because you very rarely put them at the top of the pigeon-holes, they are usually a bit farther down, It usually is a way of keeping them down, under your control, even if it is only mentally, you are asserting your superiority over them, I think more often than not it is that.

Mike: It sounds in many ways that the best antidote to this behaviour, which I certainly know that I am as prone to as anyone else is what you were saying about giving people the benefit of the doubt, always trying to take a more positive view of them even if they seem thoroughly unreasonable, still trying to do it.

S: Yes. I think that you should remember that you might get a totally different impression if you met them under different circumstances.

Clive: I think also that it is, it works both ways, they have, or they appear to have a fixed opinion which you strongly react to, and therefore [229] do it back to them, and it has a downward deflecting effect, that eventually if you are, it is strong enough you both end up with a very base opinion of each other indeed. Whereas a spiritual relationship should be the exact opposite to that, it should have an upward effect.

S: Anyway how did we get on to that? (laughter) The difficulty of knowing other people, not taking one's feelings as objectively valid, with regard to matters of fact, and speaking from one's experience. And the Buddha is speaking from his experience, and us likewise speaking from our experience. But our actual experience, not putting in terms of experience something which in fact is not experience, which might be imagination or fantasy or misunderstanding. When you say that "I feel that you have got something against me," you are putting non-experience in the language of experience, so as to elude refutation. Feeling a feeling is an experience, so if you say that you feel something you are claiming to experience it. So you are

putting in terms of experience that which you do not actually experience in order to escape refutation. So if someone does that, you have to draw attention to this fact, that in fact you suspect that you do not feel that I have something against you, it is purely imagination on your part. It is not in fact anything that you feel; the fact that you feel that I am against you or have something against you, is not proof that I have in fact something against you. The fact that you feel that god exists, is not proof of the existence of god. I mean this is the argument of the Christian: "I feel that God exists", well that is no proof. So in the same way, with "I feel that you are angry with me", that is no proof. If I say that I am not angry, you should accept that unless you can produce evidence that I am angry with you. I think that in the FWBO there is at present far too much, what I call, subjectivism. People attaching far too much importance to their feelings and considering them as constituting some kind of objective validity, but they do not. Feelings are only feelings. They are important as feelings but they are no more than feelings.

Bob: It is quite understandable if you have spent most of your life being out of touch with your feelings completely, and (laughter) if you start investing them with a certain amount of importance.

S: Ah that is all right, as feelings. Feelings, but not masquerading as something else.

.Clive: I think people have difficulty distinguishing between what their feelings are and what their emotional reactions are.

S: Yes, but I mean emotional reaction is an emotion, is a feeling. But it doesn't necessarily tell you anything about the real nature of that which against you are reacting. I was talking with someone not so long ago, and [230] an Order Member, and we were talking about this. I think he introduced the subject, that : I've lost the train of thought, perhaps it'll come back to me, would someone like to read the next verse.

V276 "You yourselves should make an effort; the Awakened Ones are only teachers. Those devoted to meditation arrive at release from the bonds of Mara"

S: This is quite a crucial verse and in a way quite a crucial teaching. The Tathagatas only explain, only point out, only make clear but you your self should make the effort. It seems so simple and straightforward in a way, but it is probably only Buddhism that has really emphasized this. That if the individual is to develop, then he can only develop by his free effort. But the Buddhas themselves can do no more than point out, explain exhort, encourage, but, what they cannot do by their very nature is to try to bully you into doing something.

Murray: Is that strictly true? Putting the Vajrayana aside and the whole thing about initiation, in the Canon it is quite clearly stated on several occasions that the Buddha has spoken to people and just by his presence he, they have been illuminated to a certain extent.

S: Yes, but what does that mean? what presence? does that presence represent the Buddha's making an effort for them? Have they not responded to that?

Murray: Not making an effort for them, certainly that person must be receptive, but it seems to me that Buddha is more than explaining



S: When I say explaining, I don't mean that he merely puts it across intellectually because part of the communication is the Buddha's own personality itself. Because when the Buddha speaks or when the Buddha makes clear, what he makes clear is not just certain abstract concepts, what he makes clear is the Ideal itself. And that cannot be done in just intellectual terms, it had to be done, so to speak in emotional terms. But it is just a putting across, a communication by the Buddha. But you yourself must still make the effort.

Clive: Could you say that the presence of the Buddha stimulates someone's energy and they are awakened by the fact that they stimulated.

S: well yes if they see what the Buddha is really like, and they respond to that and their energy is aroused, yes it is still their energy. But they don't have to be stimulated, I mean there are instances in the Pali Scriptures where somebody refused to be inspired by the Buddha. There was the Buddha not only speaking but actually standing in front of that person but they just refused to be impressed and turned away. But you cannot be forced.

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Clive: Why do you think that happens?

S: Well people are doing it all the time... Why do they do it?

Mike: They don't want to grow.

S: They don't want to grow basically. It is easier not growing, so they think.

Clive: Maybe because they have to let go of some part of themselves, some ego.

S: This is what it is, it all amounts to the same thing. The gravitational pull and so on. But there must be a pretty strong gravitational pull if you are face to face with the Buddha, and there is the Buddha talking to you and you just won't respond you just go away.

Clive: I remember that cartoon where there is this man Flying an aircraft and the aircraft is absolutely shattered to bits and was hardly flying, and he had a grimaced face like this and he was going along and the caption was "Who cares". It is a bit like that, you meet pockets of that attitude in yourself at certain times. (laughter)

S: Mm, you just won't respond. You can even hear, somebody says to somebody "why don't you join in the puja, it is so nice, all these candles blazing away and all those lovely flowers" and maybe at other times you have thoroughly enjoyed it but for some reason or other, this time you say, no I am not interested, I don't want to join in" and you just go away. You don't perhaps know why yourself even, you just know that you don't want to join in there is something in you that says no, even though objectively you recognize the situation as such a positive one in which you would feel so positive but something holds you back, so you don't want to be positive, you are fed up with being positive (laughter) You want to indulge in a bit of negativity.

Pete : It is difficult to know what to say to someone like that.

Mike: It is often more complicated than that, I myself personally have often found more often

than not, that I come out of pujas, not the same as I went in, often even drier and I often I find it is better if I go and read quietly some poetry,

S: Yes, but I am thinking of the example of someone who even normally does get a lot out of puja but for some strange reason on one particular occasion he just doesn't want to. He doesn't want to be positive, but he knows he could be positive under those circumstances, but he doesn't want to go into them fully because he knows that it would make him feel positive and he doesn't want to feel positive, he doesn't see why he should feel positive (laughter)

Clive: I think that might be true in some situations but there are differences aren't there, because I find sometimes that I don't want to do anything and I know that actually sometimes it is better that I just [232] experience the negativity, because I know from past experience that it passes and often I feel quite, much better afterwards. I suppose you have to learn to handle it, but I find at the moment it's often much better if I don't do anything that I don't want to do, when I am feeling like that.

S: That you could say is a sort of long term strategy but eventually be more positive, in the long run be more positive. But in the instance that I mentioned someone has a sort of a reaction against positivity itself. This can sometimes happen.

Clive: Is it the reaction against being positive or is it a reaction about the transformation of your present state into being positive

S: Yes, well this is what it amounts to anyway because if you were positive you would want to be positive. If you don't want to be positive it suggests that you're not already in a positive state, so you don't want to be made positive. You sometimes feel that with people especially people who are a bit gloomy and negative, you try to cheer them up and you have a hard job on your hands sometimes because they want to be negative, they want to be unhappy, they want to be sad, and nothing that you can do can change them, you can produce all the arguments in the world, all the reasons for being happy, but no, they just look at you with a sort of sour smile and just say "No, you can not make me happy, you can just try as much as you like, I am just not going to be happy, I don't want to be happy, I want to be miserable and gloomy and pessimistic" and one must learn, especially as an Order Member, to recognize such people and just not waste one's times trying to make them happy and positive when you get no co-operation from them, when they want to be something else. In away way they are happy to be miserable.

Clive: A lot of us actually have elements of this in us, not that we're like that all the time though.

S: It is as though people sometimes say "Why shouldn't I be miserable? I have a right to be miserable if I want to be" It is as though you are trying to deprive them of one of their rights.

Clive: In a sense it could be true, they might need to experience some negativity, (laughter)

Murray: It is reactivity.

Clive: Not necessarily. If one is out of touch with one's emotions, one is out of touch with one's negativity as well.

Murray: Whenever I feel like that I am just down right reactive.

S: Well the people I am thinking of had been in touch with their negative emotions for years upon years. (laughter) They are all too well in touch with them. they need to be in touch with a bit of positive emotion for once

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Mike: You get quite a few sort disturbed people that way, ones who will say will go along to psychiatrists and psychotherapists for quite a few years and they develop quite a sense of security from their bad mental state and they really can get quite,.. they don't want to lose their problem because that helps define them and give them their security. But at the same time part of their problem or the whole syndrome, is sort of like making this effort to get rid of it, an effort that they will make sure never works, so they will probably come to meditation as well, because that is another safe means of working on it.

S: Some people do the same thing with questions. I mean when I was at the Hampstead Vihara, sometimes people would come to me and say "I have been to every Buddhist teacher who has visited Britain, I've been to 23 of them now with this question, not one of them was able to answer my question, now I am sure that you will be able to answer it. So you know very well what they have in mind, because they don't really believe that you are going to be able to answer it, and of course you are not able to answer it because they have made up their minds in advance, that whatever you say is not going to be the answer to their question.

Murray: So what do you say?

S: Well I used usually to say "if so many people haven't been able to answer it, I'm pretty certain that I am not going to be able to answer it." Or I'd say "if all those people haven't been able to answer it, well perhaps it is a question that cannot be answered. Perhaps you have thought up such a profound question that there is no answer to it." So I'd handle it in that sort of way. But clearly the last thing I intended to do was try to answer that question. I wasn't that naive, not even in 1964. I used to get that in India too, people come up to you and they say to you I've heard so much about you, you are such a wise man, you are able to answer everybody's questions, and there is this question I have had for such a long time, it is such a difficult question, I have been thinking it over for years, I am sure that you can answer it, you should never be misled by that sort of approach. Try to see what they really are getting at. Some of them get quite a lot of pleasure out of thinking that their question has flummoxed everyone to whom they have put it, and no one had been able to answer it. Of course they have so contrived it and that they are not going to be satisfied with any answer. So you have to find some way of avoiding that. And be especially beware of the humble approach, the favourite approach in India, especially amongst caste Hindus is of the humble seeker who has come to learn from the Great Guru, you want to-be very suspicious of these humble seekers, (laughter), more likely or not they have come to tell you a thing or two, but it is not immediately apparent [234] from their manner. So you must be very careful not to respond by acting the Great Guru. They have got you then.

Murray: It seems that a lot of the technique to, of what you have been saying over the last couple of days, is to rumble the game before it starts.

S: Oh yes, because if you don't, there you are already playing it, you see, and it is difficult to

retrace your steps and stop playing it. It is better not to play it from the start. It is like when a woman starts flirting with you, you just mustn't respond from the start, unless you have made up your mind to play the whole game. But if you don't realize that she is flirting with you and you sort of just respond without realizing that in fact you are flirting with her, then when you do realize, it is not very easy to break it up, without seeming to be rude, so you should tumble the game here too from the beginning. The general principle being you should make sure that you tumble from the beginning those games that you do not intend to play. Otherwise in the one case, you can find yourself officially acting as the Great Guru but getting into all sorts of terrible difficulties and in the other you can find yourself practically getting married without the slightest intention, (laughter)

Mike: I think the second danger is a bit more real.

S: Don't you believe it! don't you believe it. It is very easy for people even with a little knowledge, a little confidence just to start playing the guru as it were. It is very easy. One can do it just in the course of a conversation, very easily. Not really speaking from one's own experience in a genuine way, assuming a certain position, assuming a certain knowledge that you don't really possess. It is very easy to do.

Murray: I also know people who automatically assume that as soon as you try to teach meditation or Buddhism, then you are trying to play the Guru when in fact you may not be.

S: But you should make this distinction, make this clear and say well "A great part of meditation, using that term, is just the concentration technique, which is quite easy to explain, anyone who has just practised a few times can explain it, thus the fact that I am explaining this technique only means that I am fortunate enough to have learned it, and practised it a bit, it does not mean that I am a meditation teacher, and I am merely instructing you in the use of the concentration technique, which is a very small part of meditation. On the other hand you mustn't sort of be too apologetic about yourself for your efforts, otherwise they won't have any confidence in you at all. And that will affect their own practice. And you can legitimately say, if you have, "Yes, I have worked with this method for some time, maybe for some years, I have actually found that [235] it works, I have actually found that my mind does become concentrated, it does become more positive, more creative, so I can recommend it with that confidence, but I am not a meditation teacher, that is something else. And sometimes people say this sort of thing, "Well if you teach meditation you are setting yourself up as a teacher and even a great guru, they say this because they are really trying to get at you, it is not sometimes an honest sort of difficulty or honest objection, they are just trying to get at you.

Clive: Yea, they sort of, they ask you to do it, "Please show me," and then as soon as you start to give out, they start trying to undermine you.

S: People out in the world have got lots of tricks. Sometimes they are not always conscious that they play them, but you need to recognize these little games.

Mike: The one that I have got into with people is when they discover that I am a Buddhist and do Buddhist meditation practices, it starts with, "Well aren't Buddhists selfish? And then it runs on and on, they are typically ex-Christians whose whole concept of spirituality involves basically a Christian concept, but they don't usually see that..

S: Ah, yes And there is escapism'. I was just waiting for to it come to come up in my recent television interview, but it didn't come up. One speaks in terms of not being misled by other people's tricks, but don't forget that one's own mind has also a tendency to play these tricks and you can very often learn about the tricks that other people play by just studying your own mind, because you also play them, It is a very good way of learning. Set a thief to catch a thief. It is a bit like that: the reformed poacher makes the best game-keeper.

Anyway the Buddha was saying "You yourself should make an effort, The Awakened Ones are only teachers, the devoted to meditation arrive at release from the bonds of Mara"

Tumheki kiccan atappan akkhataro Tathagata Patipanna pamokhanti jhayino Marabandhana Those devoted to meditation means, well it is much more succinctly put in Pali. The dhyanis, those who are immersed in, or who are at one with the dhyanas. The bonds of Mara of course a metaphorical expression, the devoted to meditation eventually arrive at the release from the bonds of conditionality. How they arrive, is explained in the following verses, which we have to go into tomorrow.

Bob: Is this pamokhanti, it that the devoted ones,?

S: No, that is they are released.

S: no it isn't. It is the same as the patimocca, mocca is release [236] or emancipation. Pa is an emphatic prefix, making it stronger. Any further points.

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[end of tape]

S: 'What is today?

Clive: Easter Sunday.

S: This is the day dedicated to the goddess Eostre in Anglo-Saxon times.

Mark: What is she the goddess of?

S: Spring, fertility, as far as we know. Didn't you ever wonder where the word Easter came from? So there is no harm in celebrating Easter or Eostra with it divested with its Christian religious significance.

Clive: What significance has the egg?

S: Well it is the symbol of new live, rebirth, spring, fertility, immortality even, so the Christians associated the resurrection of Christ with all those sort of pre-Christian pagan beliefs and traditions.

Pete: Apparently the peasants would go begging around the rich houses for eggs traditionally.

S: In many traditions and cultures, the egg is a symbol of immortality, for instance, in D.H. Lawrence's book on Etruscan places, there are Etruscan wall paintings in the tombs and some

of the figures are holding eggs, representing their hope of rebirth and immortality. It is an obvious symbol really. All right lets go on, taking the next three verses as a block:

v 277: "All compounded things are transient when one sees this with wisdom, then one becomes disgusted of the painful. This is the Path to Purity". Sabbe sankhara anicca ti yada pannaya passati, atha nibbindati dukke; esa magga visuddhiya

v 278 "All compounded things are fraught with pain, when with wisdom ones sees this, then he is aware of the painful. This is the Path to Purity".

Sabbe sankhara dukkha ti yada pannaya passati, /atha nibbinJai dukkhae esa maggo visruddhiya.

v 279 "All things whatsoever are insubstantial, when in wisdom one sees this, then he is aware of the painful. Sabbe dhamma anatta ti yada pannaya passati, atha nibbindati dukkhe; esa maggo visuddhiya.

So the previous verse concludes with the line "those devoted to meditation arrive at the release from the bonds of Mara" and these three verses make it clear exactly how one arrives at that release of the bonds of Mara, one arrives at it through or by means of Insight. So what is Insight? Insight into what? Well these three verses make that point clear, it is insight into the transient nature of all compounded things, the painful nature of all compounded things, and the insubstantiality of all things whatsoever. So let's go that a little. Compounded thins, the text says [239] samkhara, Sankharas are simply those things that are put together, which are compounded, which are composite, so clearly all composite things are transient because whatever has been put together can be taken apart. like a motor car or a human body has been put together from various constituent parts, various elements, and one day whatever it is that holds them together will just relax its hold and they will all fall apart. So whatever is compounded is transient. All mundane things are transient, because all mundane things are compounded. So what does that mean in practical terms? If you see things in this way, what will be the effect of that?

v: You won't hold on to anything.

S: You won't hold on to anything, so this sort of seeing, this sort of insight, is a powerful antidote to craving and to clinging. Well clearly this sort of Insight, this sort of Vision or this sort of wisdom, is not just intellectual, not just theoretical, it has to have the force of one's whole being behind it. It has to have the concentrated energy of one's own being behind it, and one can only marshal or mobilize that energy through concentration, through meditation. So this is why it says all compounded things are transient, when one sees this with wisdom, that is to say Transcendental Wisdom, not the wisdom that comes by hearing or reflecting, then one becomes disgusted at the painful. That is to say the composite itself, the compounded itself. Not disgusted in the psychological sense, the word here is nibbindati, one just lets go, one no longer hangs on One no longer clings. So if you really understand that all compounded things are transient, you won't feel the same involvement with the world, you won't in a way take the world so seriously as you did before, and this is the Path to Purity. Purity here meaning Nirvana itself probably. This is the path to Nirvana. This is the path of the Higher Evolution. So these verses are considered quite crucial, because they make it clear in what insight essentially consists. If you see what is essentially compounded, as

uncompounded, if you see the transient as permanent, then you have no insight. You are blinded by ignorance. You are blinded by delusion. But it is so very easy for people to think when they are bound by attachment that transient things are actually going to last forever and you are even surprised when they come to an end. It is as though you really had believed that they would never come to an end, but that is your delusion, that is your craving.

Murray: In Boston there is this big Museum of Science, they have all these big photographs of atoms, which is basically what we are comprised of and the interesting thing is that the main element in an atom is empty space. I thought at the time how often do we actually feel in life this space, but it is more like that we have got a concrete block on our shoulders.

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Bob: Do you happen to know where physical science is in terms of trying to find an uncompounded, the uncompounded building material of...

S: Well they did think once upon a time that they had found the uncompounded building blocks so to speak, of existence in the atoms but then they found that the atom itself was composite and apparently even those elements of which the atom consists are composite and in the end you have just got energy, which is again what Buddhism tells you. When you say that all things are transient well you mustn't understand that in too literally a sort of fashion, it means that everything is energy also, in a state of perpetual transformation, nothing is standing still. Buddhism sees the universe as dynamic not as static. But when you start becoming attached to things and start hanging on and clinging it is as though you try to arrest the flow, you try to stem the flow, you want things to remain just as they are for ever, but they can't, because nature by its very existence is flowing on and changing and one thing is being transformed into another perpetually. It is though you are in the midst of the sea in a boat and you see a beautiful wave and it is so beautiful, it just sort of towers up and there is foam at the top of the wave and it is all glittering in the sunshine and it as though you want to keep that wave like that, but it is impossible, because it just stays like that for an instant and then it will topple over. Of course if you take a photograph of the wave, well yes, relatively speaking the photograph doesn't change and you can go on looking at that photograph But even the photograph will change eventually because the very celluloid on which it is printed will disintegrate, but if you are not careful you can take these sort of snap shots of existence and confine your attention more and more to them and live in a world of, as it were, "unchanging reality", ignoring the actual changing reality all around. sometimes something suddenly breaks through, you might be living at home with your wife and family and you might be under the impression that your wife is just the same as she has always been. But one day you discover that she has been having an affair with somebody. And you had been thinking in your delusion that all was well, you had just been gazing at this snap shot of your wife that you had which had frozen her as it were at one particular instant and you had lost contact with your wife as she actually was, changing all the time, so this is what we do. We don't see things as transient, we try to arrest the flow and see things in terms of static images.

And it is the same, I give the illustration of husband and wife, that is a common one, but what about parents and children, it is though the parents take snapshots of the children when they are small and they carry those little snap-shots around with them the rest of their lives, [241] sometimes literally, father has got it in his wallet, and mum's got it in her handbag and takes it out and looks at it periodically, it is as though they don't realize that you have grown up in the meantime, that you have changed, but you are there arrested for all time for them, in those

yearly snapshots. And if you don't conform to those early snapshots, well they don't like it, they suffer because they are trying to cling on to, to make unchanging what is essentially changing but we do this all the time. We try to cling on to our static images of things.

Mike: Like our whole culture is really geared and puts most of its energy into trying to bolster up our whole view of everything as static. In a sense television is one of the most deadly mediums in this, it tries to ... it is like the snapshot grown super large, always portraying-say especially American television,-portrays America as an image in a way it never has been and say that is the way it always should be and is.

S: So if you try to arrest the flow, if you cling on to the static images sooner or later you will come into collision with the flow itself, the flow itself will break in and overwhelm you and sweep all your little snap shots out of .your hand, and then of course you will suffer. But if you don't do that, if you don't try to collect these little snapshots if you remain wide awake to the actual flow of existence and don't cling then of course you will be free from suffering. which is exactly what this verse says, that is the path of Purity.

So in the next verse there is a slight change, instead of seeing all things as transient, you see all things, compounded things, as fraught with pain, that is potentially fraught with pain if you cling on to them, if you don't cling on to them, if you don't sort of try to resemble your static picture galleries and live in that, then you don't suffer, you are free from suffering. You don't have to suffer, except in so far as you are involved in that suffering which is inherent in having a psycho-physical organism at all. Mental suffering you will certainly be free from.

Then all things whatsoever are insubstantial, ... so do you see a change here? In the first two verses it was 'all compounded things' that is to say the uncompounded elements as it is called in the Theravada is excluded, these two statements in these two verses refer only to conditioned existence, compounded existences but then in verse three it says, all things whatever, and the word which translates that is Dhamma, not just compounded things but even the uncompounded, the unconditioned, even Nirvana. So this is a much more inclusive term and of this it is said of all things whatsoever it is said that they are insubstantial. [242] Well it is not a very good translation, it translates anatta. So what does one mean by anatta, what is this anatta.

Murray: No selfhood

S: But what is that?

Murray: A fixed enduring identity.

S: What does one mean by that?

Murray: Well there is nothing that you can point to and say this is this or that is that, as distinct from this and that. I mean they are all relative differentiations basically. just based on concepts.

S: In other words it, everything is a continual process of flow, If you can say well this is definitely this, in ultimate reality, it means that you have been able to arrest the flow, which you cannot. There is just continuous process, there is nothing that changes, there is change,



without anything that is the subject of the change, there is pure change. So for instance if you take time, well all right there is an hour, but what is an hour. An hour consists of two half hours, what is half an hour? A half hour consists of two quarter hours and so on, you can go infinitely dividing. It is not made of definite discrete bits put side by side, the process is absolutely continuous, continual, changes are taking place literally all the time, it is not that something changes but that the thing itself is change. So things have no fixed identity and in that way even the difference between the conditioned and the unconditioned disappears. so in what sense does one speak of the unconditioned? Is that unconditionedness not itself nature?

Mike: That is just a trick of language. By adding the prefix [sic] -ness, you see it as a sort of -?- because language in a sense i.e. not equipped to deal with the Unconditioned at all.

S: So how can one distinguish? I mean one does in Buddhism speak of the Unconditioned or one speaks of Nirvana, should one do that or is that all wrong? One speaks of eternal unchanging state beyond the flux of the Samsara, this is the usual Buddhist language isn't it?

Mike: Is it usual to speak of Nirvana as unchanging.

S: Oh yes. Nirvana is beyond time, so it is said.

Mike: But does that mean the same as unchanging if it is outside or beyond time?

S: Well change takes place within time, so to speak. No time, no change, So if something doesn't change well it must mean it is beyond time. If it is beyond time, it cannot but be changeless. This is actually said of Nirvana. And also it is uncompounded. That is to say it is Asankata. [243] so why does a thing not change? Well what is change? It is the coming apart as it were of the parts of which something is composed. Nirvana is not composed of parts, therefore it does not change. But have we not got here an entity? I mean the texts say that all dharmas are anatta, but there is that Dhamma which is Nibbana, and does it not seem to be an entity? The fixed nature of which is not to change etc. etc.?

Murray: Only in terms of language, but experientially the unconditioned is not an entity. But to indicate it with language it becomes an entity.

S: Then all right, what are you indicating when in language you speak of the unconditioned? It suggests that the Unconditioned has a different nature from the conditioned. So that it has a real nature, there is a real conditioned and a real unconditioned, so therefore they are not anatta. So is not Buddhism not contradicting itself here? Is not Atmavada not smuggling itself in?

Cieron: But you have got to use duality to translate into duality. We do experience things in a dual way

S: But is one transcending duality in this way? You end up with a fixed conception of the Conditioned and a fixed conception of the Unconditioned.

Cieron: Well if you end up with those fixed conceptions, you are not transcending duality, but if they help you...

S: But do they help you?

Mike: I think that they are justifiable in as much as they help one.

S: I think they are justifiable if they are used as it were poetically. But I think there is another way of dealing with the question: You have got your two processes, you have got your reactive process and you have got your creative process. They are both processes. So I think it is as it were safer, to think of Nirvana as representing the uttermost perceptible reaches of the creative process, which of course is a process and therefore anatta, rather than as a fixed static entity at the end of any such process. I think actually in the Hinayana, they did let a bit of substantialism, a bit of Atmavada did creep in, but we have the Buddha's very early formulation of what I call the creative model, the process of the creative model. I think probably it would be better if we stuck to those, if we thought in terms of this series of positive nidanas sort of indefinitely prolonged and where the series just goes beyond our vision, disappears over the horizon, well that point of disappearance is what we call Nirvana, we just cannot see beyond that, even in imagination, even in thought, but not think actually of a static, as it were, Absolute, to which or after which the creative process or the Path, the Eightfold Path conducts one. Yes we can speak of [244] Nirvana as it were poetically as though it was a fixed state, but we should be very careful about using such language and not construe from that language a sort of metaphysical Absolute of a static nature.

Mike: So one should only really understand Nirvana as uncompounded implying unchanging in this poetic sense rather any sort of literal sense or only in that it represents a contrast to...

S: One should not regard Nirvana as a sort of culmination of a series, but only as the furthest imaginable term of a series, not assume because one cannot imagine even a term beyond Nirvana, that there is in Fact no term beyond Nirvana. Nirvana stands not so much for a fixed state or stage or entity, but for all those unfathomable reaches of the creative process, which as it were, lie behind whatever it is that one perceives. Whatever one perceives at present as the ultimate. You see the Theravadins, especially the Sarvastivadins, they started taking their own dharma theory too seriously too literally. They started thinking of compounded existence as actually consisting of finite entities and Nirvana as not consisting of finite entities but of only one entity and therefore as being impartite, indivisible and therefore, since it was uncompounded, eternal, But one can question that Theravada conception of dharmas, the Mahayana does have the Madhyamaka does have it that the dharmas are not really sort of fixed static elements out of which everything is made up, but charges of energy, flashes of energy, pinpoints of energy which are themselves processes. So it is not that you have got as far as the conditioned, a plurality of finite dharmas which are forming in varying combinations, the object of the mundane world, and then over and above them you have got a sort of dharma in the singular which is not made up of anything and which is therefore unconditioned, it isn't that. It is more that you have got this sort of stream of energy, on the one hand sort of circling around and round and on the other hand, sort of spiralling up and up indefinitely and Nirvana being only the further-most point on the spiral that we can see. And this more dynamic view is fully in accordance with the Buddha's teaching in the Pali scriptures, especially with what seem to be the earlier and more authentic portions.

Murray: Which books are those?

S: Well excluding the Abhidharma Pitaka of course and parts of Majjhima Nikaya, parts of

the Digha-Nikaya, a lot of the (?)kayas and (?)kaya, especially the Sutta Nipata and the Udana and the Ittuvitaka, and the Dhammapada in part.

Mike: In the Bodhisattva series of lectures. there is one lecture where you go into Sunyata. If I remember the basic marks of sunyata, [245] sunyata of the conditioned and from that, isn't the origin of sunyata partly this reaction against the overfixing of dharms and seeing that dharms as sunya.

S: Yes, in other words they are not entities but what I have described as charges of energy, they are process, they are empty of any fixed entity, dhammas themselves are not Fixed entities out of which changing objects are made, they are themselves explosions of energy are themselves changing. The Hinayana tended to treat them as fixed unchanging entities, of various kinds which entered into varying combinations and in that way produced the multiplicity of objects of the world.

Murray: It seems to me, I am not sure if this is correct, that the Hinayana confused the cessation of self, the idea of enduring fixed self standing beyond things, they confused the cessation of that with the cessation of all being whatsoever. In the sense when one became enlightened and was reborn into a Nirvana which for all intents and purposes was a form of World of some sort.

S: Yes you could say that. I prefer very much to think in terms of the series of positive nidanas, that seems to make sense of the Buddha's teaching in a way that these later Abhidharma like interpretations don't. Because quite clearly there can be no uttermost fixed unchanging entity any where as this verse says, if there is a process of the reactive mind and a process of the creative mind, whereas the Hinayana, Abhidharma view takes, tends to posit a world of fixed entities, the conditioned is a world of fixed entities and the Unconditioned is world of A Fixed entity. In other words it seems to tend against the Anatta principle, or doctrine or teaching. It is superficially true to it, but fundamentally not true to it. It is superficially true to it in the sense that it says all compounded things are transient, but what are compounded things? What are they compounded of? compounded of Fixed entities! So you remove the fixity one stage further back, you say objects are changeable and impermanent but the dharms of which they are made up are permanent. So what is the gain? The delusion has simply become more subtle. And the Mahayana pointed it out, this is what it means when it says the Dhammas are sunyata that they are not to be regarded as fixed entities. They themselves are processes, there is nothing but processes.

Andy : In verse 279, it says Sabbe dhamma anatta ti, isn't that saying all dharms are insubstantial and because before it talked about sanskharas is it saying all accumulations of dharms are??, the dharms themselves are insubstantial?

S: The distinction from the Theravada, Abhidhamma point of view is that [246] whereas compounded things are dukkha, the uncompounded elements or Nirvana is not, whereas all the compounded things are transient the uncompounded element is not transient. But all elements whatsoever, whether compounded or uncompounded are anatta, are insubstantial. This is why the word dhamma is used here to indicate that the compounded and the uncompounded are both indicated, but what I have been trying to point, out is that the whole way of conceiving the compounded and uncompounded really represents a subtle betrayal of the anatta doctrine itself. And that is why the Mahayana from a certain point of view with its

teaching of Sunyata reasserted the anatta doctrine by applying it to these smaller unchanging elements which the Hinayana posited as making up the world of compounded existence. I mean the Hinayana did not intend to deny the anatta doctrine they always maintained that they never denied it, but they tended to treat the dhammas that made up the phenomenal world as fixed entities, so therefore they were as it were atmavadins on that more subtle level, and it was to exorcise that more subtle atmavada that the Mahayana put forward the sunyata principle. But if you regard conditioned existence as a process, a reactive process and if you think of the path and the goal as a creative process, then you avoid all those sort of possible misunderstandings, it is clear that the whole thing is a gigantic process, either cyclical or spiral, there is no question of any fixed entity, no question of any atmavada creeping in.

Murray: Do you think it is fair to say then, looking at Buddhism as Buddhism rather than a particular school, the Hinayana, they dealt with the first stage all right, but they failed to go beyond it. They sort of became stuck.

S: Well one could put it that way, but one could also say that they took their own language too literally. They wanted to break down the atta idea, so they analysed compounded things into constituent parts, but then they just took the results of that analysis they took the constituent parts themselves too literally as actual even unchanging constituent parts. In that way on a subtle level, they lapsed or relapsed into attavada and they were, at least at that stage not sufficiently sophisticated intellectually to see what was happening.

Mike: It suggests in a sense that the, perhaps at some stage maybe this is not correct historically, but it suggest at some stage they lost their creativity, that they were not experiencing insight through meditation and it was becoming an intellectual Formulation. Because they didn't have the feeling.

S: Well this is the feeling that one gets from the Abhidharma literature.

Though some parts of it are very interesting and really fascinating and quite helpful. But from an as it were metaphysical point of view they seem to [247] have been a certain rigidity setting in probably because they had lost contact with their sources of vision. One could say the same thing did happen in the end even with the Mahayana, even with the Madhyamaka, they got into rather scholastic classification and enumeration of the different types of sunyata. Again it was scholasticism, though that didn't happen for a very long time and mean while they had made it very clear that the Dharmas were not ultimate entities, elements in the sense of being fixed and unchanging. But again to get back to my main point, it is best and also truest to the Buddhist tradition really to think in terms of these two processes, that is to say the process of the reactive mind, reactive existence itself, and the process of the creative mind. You cannot go far wrong then. And these formulations were of course given by the Buddha himself, in the Pali scriptures. But subsequently forgotten to a great extent by the Theravadins.

Murray: At this point when the Hinayana started positing the Abhidharma and becoming quite sort of rigid and the Madhyamikas also started positing the differentiations of sunyata etc., is that at the time Nagarjuna came on to the scene...

S: Yes Nagarjuna did criticize in the Madhyamika-Karika, the categories of the Abhidharma, he was aware of a tendency on the part of the Abhidharma, especially those of the

Sarvastivada school Who carried the process furthest, he became aware of their tendency to regard their categories as fixed entities, taking them quite literally.

Murray: Did he also resurrect the Madhyamaka as it were?

S: No he was regarded as the founder of the Madhyamika, basing himself mainly on the Perfection of Wisdom sutras

All right on to v.280:

"The idler who strives not when he should strive, who, though young and strong, is slothful, is feeble in maintaining right mindedness, is sluggish and inert, such a one finds not the way to wisdom."

yuva bail alasyan upeto/sanasanna-sankappa-mano  
Utthanakalamhi anutthahano  
kusito pannaya maggan alaso na vindati'

S: The Buddha always seems to hit the nail on the head in the Dhammapada. (Laughter) There is another verse about the big fat boar wallowing and tossing and turning from side to side, but anyway let's stay with this one.

Mike: He doesn't try to say things with nice language.

S: It just straightforward. So what is the Buddha really talking about? What sort of state or condition?

v: Sloth and torpor.

S: So it is sloth and torpor. And he is not only speaking sloth and torpor in [248] general but in the young and strong in particular, that is to say those who one least expects to be slothful and torpid, one expects young people to be vigorous and enthusiastic and inspired and all that sort of thing. Well even if they aren't, well what is there to be hoped for from the oldies?

Mark: It seems as if he is saying that you should make an effort before the conditionings have set in hard.

S: Yes But what is that makes people slothful, what causes sloth and torpor to set in? What is the antidote to sloth and torpor?

v: Football. (laughter)

Mike: A mixture of energy and vision.

Pete: Inspiration.

S: How do you get inspiration? How do you inspire yourself?

Cieron: By getting in touch with the Dharma.

S: But some people don't get inspired even then, the Dharma becomes just an idea, some intellectual understanding, there is not emotional response, so what has happened? Would you say then that people who are slothful people who are overcome by sloth and torpor are people among other things perhaps are out of touch with their emotions? Can you imagine someone being in touch with their emotions and at the same time suffering from sloth and torpor. Can you imagine that?

Bob: I think I can.

S: You can? I speak of course of positive emotions especially. But can you be full of sloth and torpor even if you are in contact with negative emotions let's say anger? You are not likely to be overcome by sloth and torpor if you are really angry.

Mike: But what does sloth and torpor mean in this context, does it mean necessarily physical laziness or a subtler laziness where maybe you are flinging yourself around in a wild social life but you...

S: Ah, the term ... idler ... but speaking in terms of sloth and torpor [kalamhi?] it is sometimes said that sloth is due to a physical heaviness as when you have just had a heavy meal and torpor is a sort of a mental counterpart of that. One is sluggishness of body the other is sluggishness of mind. So you can understand sluggishness of body, that is more easy to understand, but maybe you have had a big meal. maybe you know

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you get mentally and emotionally sort of sluggish

v: it is when you don't feel anything in particular at all, there is not stimulation around you.

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S: And I mean after all emotion, the way it is spelt it is connected with motion, if you have not emotion, well you have not motivation, you don't move, so it does suggest that sloth and torpor, or at least torpor, that is to say sluggishness on the mental plane is associated with being not in touch with one's emotions. So perhaps that is the, at least the first step, in counteracting mental sluggishness, laziness, inertia, to contact or recontact one's emotions.

Clive: That requires action of some description, which you are not likely to do if you are slothful.

S: Well it depends on the degree of slothfulness, presumably. Perhaps you just about stagger to your feet and put a record on the record player. But if you are unable to do even that, well presumably some good friend has to come along and see the dreadful mental state that you are in, and either take you by the hand and pull you up into a sitting position, or just go and put on one of your favourite records.

Andy: In every mental state, there is a spark of the positive, it is just a matter of grabbing hold of it and not letting go of it.

Mike: It is like there is an argument for behaving, well, wilfully, or perhaps in some

circumstances like this, if this is the only way to get yourself going. Even in an animal way, you could probably feel that you have to do something.

S: I think it is also a question of recognizing what you are really interested in, but I have seen it in communities so often, someone says after supper "Anyone for a study group tonight?" Yawn, "I'm so tired, I think I will go to bed early tonight" and then someone says "Well why don't we have a reading aloud read From the Light of Asia," Yawn Oh no I am so tired", but then someone says "There is such and such a film on in town tonight, why don't we go in and see that, boys" and everybody comes to life and off they go happily (laughter) Full of life. So it is just a question of recognizing where one's interests really lie, at least for the time being. And then the emotional energies do get aroused, but if you have got fixed ideas well they can only be aroused by meditation or classical music, well you may never get very far, because the truth may be that you really don't want those things, you really do want to go and see a film or something like that, And you have to just accept that, and do it skilfully.

Pete: On the principle that any energy is better than no energy?

S: In a sense, provided that it is not actually unskilful or doing harm to other beings.

Mike: It seems that where Kalyana Mitrata is quite good at times. I feel [250] that probably with most of us we are going to be less hypocritical in that sort of situation because we go and see our Kalyana mitra, you don't feel obliged to go and do a meditation session with him first and then talk and do a puja, you go to a film or just out for dinner or something like that.

S: I remember once when visiting a Centre, possibly Glasgow, the Chairman of that Centre, Ajita, was talking about me and someone asked him "Well, what are going to do this evening? and he said "I don't know, I am thinking it over, I'm not sure whether to go to the class, or go and see a film" in a quite matter of fact way as if he didn't feel any sort of dutiful obligation to go to the class as though it is completely free to do whatever he thought best. So I said that it was very good, because he was considering quite objectively what he really wanted to do, whereas some people, some chairmen even, might have felt obliged to go and attend the class without really wanting to and therefore not really being fair, which is undesirable, Of course I'm sure it would be better, absolutely, to go and attend the class and not go and see the film, but relatively speaking what is best taking the longer view at that particular moment, well it might be to go and see the film because you cannot just give into yourself at every stage, so to speak, if you never want to go to the class, and always want to go and see a film, never want to go to the study group, always want to go to the disco, well just ask yourself seriously, are you really interested in the spiritual life at all, wouldn't it be better that you moved out of the community and just lead a worldly life at least for a while.

Anyway this is all part of getting in touch with one's feelings, but it is apparently something people need to do. In India if Lokamitra was talking to people about getting in touch with their feelings, people would really laugh at him, wouldn't know what he was talking about. But it is as though many people here act out of sort of, alienated motivation. Their feelings aren't very much involved, they very easily get out of touch with them, and start acting out of a sense of duty for doing things because they have always done them and the life goes out of everything and the life goes out of them if they are not careful. Or else you start leading a double life, officially you are very devoted to meditation, to study but unofficially you lead an underground life of a very different nature, which doesn't really ever come to the surface. I

mean people in ordinary society do this, they certainly did this in the Victorian period, they literally led double lives. I think that isn't good for any human being. I mean for instance supposing Ajita had said, not that I think that I'll go and see the film, but supposing he had said that I am not very well tonight, I think that I just go and lie down, You boys go to the class and supposing as soon as the class had started he sort of quietly got up and went to see the film, well that would be leading a double life. And that is highly undesirable. But clearly [251] Ajita had got it all quite well sussed out.

Murray: The inclination is to go to the class particularly if you are around..(laughter)

S: You say inclination, you mean genuine inclination?

Murray: Well maybe its not a genuine inclination, but you feel you should.

S: But where does this should come from? I suppose one can have an objective should, you decide on balance that yes, that is what you really want to do even though you don't have a very strong feeling at this present instant, you might even know from past experience that even though you are reluctant to go along once you get there you really get into things and enjoy it. It is just an initial resistance that you have to overcome. But if you find after some time that well, you force yourself to go along, and even while you are sitting there, you are not really enjoying it, and this always happens, well you have to reconsider your position. If you never enjoy your meditation, never enjoy discussing the dharma, well then you have to reconsider your position. Occasionally this happens with people, and they move out of the community, they realize that they were only attracted by the group warmth or the approval that they got, or the attention that they got and they aren't really into the Dharma.

Mike: I think that there can be problems sometimes with a sort of pressure being put on people in a situation. When I was at the LBC for 2 1/2 years at Sukhavati, I was sort of regularly put under pressure to go to the regulars class, and a mixture of guilt and duty and resentment I would go at the beginning of a session, but within three weeks, I had sort have be leaving after the meditation, leaving before the meditation, and then not going at all. It just left me cold. And I went to West London, and then I did get a lot out of the regulars class. But it was this element of being put under pressure by people who quite obviously sincerely felt that I could get something out of it and contribute to the class, I am not really quite sure how people should respond to that?

S: So why do people feel pressure as pressure? For instance there was a discussion maybe a couple of years ago and one Order Member complained that he was under pressure from another order member, so I said that I refused to accept that statement. I do not accept that one Order Member can be pressured by another. Supposing some Order Member said to you, you being an order member, "all right let's go along to the meditation class. "I don't think that is pressure, even if he says that he thinks that you ought to go along, that is not pressure, because .you also being an Order Member, can turn round and say I don't think I will". So where does the question of pressure come in?

Murray: It is the pressure you put on yourself.

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S: Yes it is pressure you put on yourself. I mean he thinks that you ought to go along, and he



says so, but that is not pressure. You are completely free to say "Well, I don't think that I should go along, and I am not". So there is no question of pressure, one Order Member being able to exert pressure on another.

Cieron: I think ideally that might be the case but I don't know if...

S: Well if you allow pressure to be exerted on you, if you as an Order Member allow another Order Member to exert pressure on you, that is your responsibility.

Cieron: But it is like an openness and seems to their point of view like ...

S: But that is not pressure, then you are not under pressure, you have quite willingly and happily are open to their point of view and you are ready to go along because they feel that you should, but that is not giving into pressure.

Pete: I think you should, like the person who is presumably putting on the "pressure", on to this other person should bear in mind the state of mind that the person that he is talking to, that he might be making them feel as if they are under pressure.

S: Well that means within the Order that you as an Order Member don't really think that the other person is as much an Order Member as you. Because within the Order, nobody is in a position of exerting any sort of pressure or wielding any sort of power over any-body else. no even if someone by any chance tries it on, you don't tolerate that.

Bob: But people can put you under pressure by like reminding you of a responsibility.

S: Well perhaps you have got responsibility, if you have got them, then it is up to you to discharge them and not feel that the other person is putting pressure on you. If you haven't got responsibilities, tell him so, which means that you don't allow him to put pressure on to you. It is for you to decide what your responsibilities are. You can be open to other people's friendly advice or gentle guidance, but one shouldn't give into pressure. I know it is quite difficult if you are a Mitra or a Friend and an Order Member very much wants you to do something, it is quite difficult to resist that, because you sometimes think quite genuinely "Well perhaps he knows better than I do" and it maybe that he does, but he does, or even if he does, you should be very cautious about putting things so strongly that you really not in a position to refuse, which means that you are deprived of your freedom and initiative.

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Clive: I don't think I have ever felt in a position where I couldn't refuse.

Bob: But there is an intermediary position where you can refuse, and go off and not feel too happy about ..

S: Ah, because you have not really refused. You have not refused 100 percent There is a part of you which is still saying that you ought to have done that.

Pete: Or you just feel unfaithful to that group. Because the person may not even ask you but just by not going to the class, you feel unfaithful.

S: Well I don't think you should. I think that it is a group feeling. I mean the only legitimate feeling of unfaithfulness is that you have let yourself down, you have been unfaithful to yourself. I am not saying that you cannot let someone else down but you shouldn't feel it in that sort of reactive way. You can only let somebody down when you have promised them that you will do something for them or with them, and they are relying upon you and then you just don't turn up. That is being unfaithful and for that you should feel really sorry. But no one should have a sort of, himself an emotional investment in your attending his class. If you feel all upset about not attending his class because you know he is going to be personally upset, that is all wrong. That seems to be a bit like emotional blackmail. You see what I mean? If you have to go along to his class to keep him happy, in a personal sort of way, that is not right. Or if you feel under any sort of pressure to do that. If he is genuinely sorry that you have missed the class because he is convinced that it would have done you good well that is another matter. But sometimes people who are taking classes and running groups, they have a personal emotional investment and feel almost let down when you don't turn up, even though you are perfectly free not to turn up because you are going along for your own good. And if it isn't the best thing for you that particular evening, why should you go along? And there is no point in the person who is taking the class, feeling personally let down and upset. It means, he is trying to get, or getting from the class something that he ought not to be getting or trying to get, namely a sort of personal security. So one has to be quite careful that one is in fact encouraging someone to go along to something for his sake, not for your sake, because you are taking the group, and you want it to be as it were 'successful',

Mike: But isn't that actually in one sense valid, say if someone is running a beginners class and for very positive reasons he wants it to be successful and therefore want the right strong Order Members and mitras to come along and support

S: Well' I spoke of an emotional investment. And I meant in a negative [254] sense that he is getting some security out of that, not that he is quite objectively doing it for everybody's benefit. But supposing you had promised him to go along and support and you break that promise, well yes you have let him down. But supposing there is some relatively new person coming along, maybe he gets a lot out of the class, the first few times, and then maybe one evening it is not the best thing for him to do, for one reason or another to go along, he should feel quite, perfectly free not to go along. Not feel that if he doesn't go, the person who is taking the class is going to be hurt. One must be very careful to leave other people free. If they do something out of a sense of duty or just because they don't want to upset you, there is not really much value in that from a spiritual point of view.

Murray: It seems to me in some respects that so called pressure in the Friends is quite positive, it is almost like a process of positive allurement. People using it in that sense throw various bags of carrots in your direction and if you get three or four people doing that at the same time as a Mitra, it can get to feel as pressure.

S: I mean if you feel that pressure is being put on you, say to do something, if the person is really wanting you to do it, and it really isn't a question of pressure of a personal interest, then if you refuse to do it there will not be a negative reaction. If the person's insistence has been quite genuine and positive and-objective, even if you refuse, he is not going to react negatively. Because he won't be personally disappointed. But if he has got a strong subjective emotional interest in getting you to do that particular thing, and then you refuse, well then he will go off you a bit or not be so friendly as he was before,

Murray: Yes, if he has an unhealthy motive, then there will be an unhealthy reaction.

S: So one need not ever feel under pressure. Really there is no pressure coming from the other person. This is how one should think. And you are quite free to agree or not to agree to what they are suggesting or even insisting upon.

Mike: I feel motives usually aren't that pure one way or another. They are usually mixed and so probably there is a genuine objective element and it is probably compounded with something subjective.

S: Well you have to try to decide which is predominating.

Clive: If you feel pressure a lot it could be from a basis of not wanting to upset people, wanting to placate them all the time, just so you can be free from pressure, but it in fact has the opposite effect. Even a raised eyebrow, can make you feel pressure, if you are in that state enough,

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Bob: I feel that in so far as pressure is exerted, it is not so much from the subjective point of view as you have been describing Bhante, but as from the person applying pressure has a certain view of an objective Situation which he sees you having a part in and that his subjective element is quite small.

S: Well then you have to make up your mind whether you share that way of looking at things.

Bob: It is like a Mitra belonging to the whole Movement not a particular centre, if a Chairman wants to hold on to his mitra it is not necessarily subjective reaction of that Chairman, so much as his view of the objective situation that he has got to deal with.

S: You could also say that sometimes people put pressure, because pressure is being put on to them, they pass on the pressure. But even then you must resist it, if you think when that particular thing is not in your interest. But you cannot actually be pressured at all, because where is the ultimate sanction, the ultimate sanction is only in violence, so no one in the FWBO can imprison you or punish you in any way, if you don't like the pressure you can always walk out, you can always go away for a while. You have got that ultimate resort, as it were. Everybody has, and one shouldn't ever feel that one is trapped and cannot get away, cannot get out of a situation. You are free to walk out at any time. Who can stop you? No one can stop you. Sometimes it is as if people feel there is an invisible wall that they cannot climb over. You can go anywhere you like. Nothing to stop you.

Bob: I find ... guilt and stuff like that, that is more powerful than fear of?

S: Aha, but they are subjective factors aren't they, yes? And some people know how to sort of play on those. You have to be (laughter)...

Mike: I think that say someone comes and bombards you with "You should do this, you should do that," and you still say no, and you go away and don't feel quite satisfied. I think that often the reason is that it has aroused one's latent, or not that latent, sense of insecurity or lack of self confidence. You are trying to build up your sense of self-confidence and that sort

of erodes it again a bit. Because I know in my case, I'm never 100 percent, well rarely, sure of a course of action.

Clive: I think that one of the main things is that if you think, if there is an incident where you are being pressured is to just experience whether you actually are feeling pressured because of an objective pressure or whether it is because of guilt. Where nobody is actually pressuring you at all, but you feeling pressured anyway.

S: But I would go so far as to say within the context of the FWBO, all [256] pressure is subjective. Because nobody in the last analysis can force you to do anything. In the last analysis, you can resist that, and no one can do a thing about it.

Cieron: Yeah, but it seems a bit too simple somehow. Because in a way, say you are in a community and one of the requirements of that community is that you sit every morning at a particular time and you don't want to do that, then there will be pressure on you to do that because otherwise you have got to leave the community.

S: But when you joined the community, if things were made clear, you joined on the understanding that you would sit every morning, but if you don't you are being unfaithful to your undertaking, you have broken your promise and they are quite right in reminding you of it. If you don't want to sit every morning, well you have no business in that community, because that is the basis of membership, or part of it. If you want to enjoy certain goodies of the community, without corresponding responsibilities then clearly you have to find another kind of community where things are much more free.

Mike: There was the case in point in Sukhavati, several years ago, with no clear fundamentals and they were later brought in. That of sitting daily and of cooking. There were people who didn't do either.

S: Well I know in the early days of Sukhavati, when they were in a hurry to get the work finished, they brought in very peripheral people, so they had just come to help with the work, so you couldn't really insist that they sat and meditated, but those who did, did do so, but that meant that there was no criterion of that kind for admission to the Sukhavati community. So it took some time to straighten things out. But one is not being subjected

to pressure when one is reminded of the promises that oneself has freely made. That I would not class as pressure.

Andy: People feel that they get pressured because they fragmented beings and they don't know that they may have neglected something, so they are not sure about something, so someone comes along and suggests that they should do something, so the answer is to be more integrated, be sure of your course of action.

Clive: If you are quite clear in your own mind, just what you have committed yourself to, but a lot of people try to lay a bit more on you. And you say "Now look, I said that I would do this, and I will do it, don't try to lay that on me"

S: no it means that when you enter a community or any other situation, there must be a certain clarity on your part and on the part of the existing members of the community. Otherwise you

will say, "When I joined the [257] community no one said that I had to cook every day or every week, no one mentioned this to me", but then they might say "Well you ought to have understood everybody knows that that is the arrangement, but it is also their responsibility to spell it out to you when you are thinking of joining that community. One doesn't want to make it too rigid and it is not a question of them handing you a list of rules when you arrive, but there should be a certain amount of clarity, at least as regards certain basic things, like meditation, if not absolutely every morning, certainly pretty nearly every morning. And then if you fail to honour your commitment in that way, and undertakings well then you can be reminded and that is not putting pressure on you because you yourself, have said that you will do those things and you have promised other people that you would.

Murray: In relation to guilt, could you explain how guilt comes about as a result of Christian conditioning, I have heard a lot about guilt, but I am not very sure about it.

S: Well very broadly speaking, the feeling of guilt seems to be tied up with fear of loss of affection, so if you take the case of the mother and child, the child does something that the mother doesn't want it to, so the mother gets tired of punishing the child, and in the end she says well look if you do that, Mummy won't love you any more. And when the child does do it, she makes a show of "No I don't want to love you any more, I am not going to hug you, just go away, you are not my little boy, I just don't love you any more." So the child's basic need is for love, so there is a conflict, he wants to do that particular thing, but he doesn't want to lose mummy's love. But for a while he doesn't do that thing therefore, but one day he just does it, and then he remembers oh, this is going to make me lose mummy's love, and that is the feeling of guilt, I have done something that will forfeit love. And if you transfer mummy to the place of god, if you feel that you have done something that god disapproves of, and that will lose you the love of god, "God doesn't love me any more, I'm wicked, I'm bad I'm a sinner" If you are conscious of having done something which will forfeit the love of god, that also brings the feeling of guilt. That you deserve punishment. And sometimes people feel guilt so strongly they want to be punished, they want to punish themselves. So as to get back the love that they have forfeited.

Murray: So even coming into the Order, if we have still residues of conditioning, we can transfer that to you or Order Members or the group as a whole

S: You sometimes notice people who want to please you. They do things to please you, not because they are convinced that they are objectively good or that they should do those things for the sake of their own development, but they want your approval, and one of the easiest ways of manipulating [258] people is by giving and withdrawing approval, especially in the case of a person who needs approval very much and maybe who can hardly live without it. That is a quite dangerous Situation. If you have a craving for somebody's approval then you are in a very vulnerable position, you can easily be exploited, you cannot bear disapproval, you cannot bear criticism perhaps, you interpret criticism as disapproval, as rejection, so you cannot bear it, so you do anything to avoid it or to resist it, to deny it, to negate it. So I think guilt is very much bound up with this fear of withdrawal of affection, either on the part of people on the part of an imagined Supreme Being.

Bob: So does its absence imply a healthy upbringing

S: It implies a healthy upbringing, a healthy self-confidence, a feeling that you can get along

without the approval of people all the time. Let them think what they like about me, I don't care, I know that I'm doing the right thing, but some people cannot adopt that attitude. It is very difficult for them to persist in any line of conduct or thought in the face of general disapproval, especially disapproval of the group with which they identify.

Bob: An observation that I have made, which I hope isn't racist, of West Indians particularly, is they don't seem to have much of a concept of guilt, they are quite happily use people or be dishonest or anything of that nature, do you consider that to be healthy? Presumably not

S: Well sometimes the accepted code of behaviour of a particular group that is to say, the kind of behaviour that wins approval is not necessarily skilful, and if you belong to gang of burglars, and you come back and say "I have pulled off a good job last night," and they will slap you on the back "Oh what a clever chap you are" and you will bask in their approval, but the activity which is being approved of is not necessarily skilful.

Mike: The famous case that I was reading about last week was on Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS in Nazi Germany, who was given a very strict authoritarian Catholic upbringing, and trained to the Officer corps in Bavaria and trained to look up to figures of authority and his world of Germany collapsed when he was in his late teens, at the end of World War I and the Republicans took over, and he was at a complete loss, until he found Hitler and just everything had to have the acceptance and approval of Hitler. And he was responsible for more murders than anybody else.

S: I think it is quite easy for people needing approval to drift into almost any group, I think it is almost a matter of chance then, whether the activity which receives approval within that group is positive or negative.

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Bob: What I am looking for is some positive manifestation of guilt, is that a contradiction in terms?

S: I would prefer to avoid the word guilt. I think you can feel deep and genuine regret when you realize that you have committed some unskilful act ion which has caused harm and suffering to other people. I don't think, I would prefer to not say that you feel guilt, I'd prefer to say that you feel very deep and genuine regret in a way something worse than guilt, more serious, more heavy than guilt, because you accept your own responsibility and you see that you have done something which you have yourself really and genuinely recognize as unskilful. You can really see that you have done harm. And in a sense there can no worse experience for a positive human being than that. You can see, it is not a question of something being put on to you, you really have done something harmful, quite objectively, and you see it. And you are really sorry. You really wish you hadn't done that.

Pete When you say worse, do you mean worse positive experience?

S: The worst experience within the context of a normally positive human being.

Pete: The experience presumably would be quite useful to you.

S: I think it would teach you a really great lesson of one kind of another either to be more

mindful or something of that kind.

Mike: What about this whole concept of conscience, of people having no conscience, and being quite cruel and ruthless and capable of any-thing.

S: Well that is that lack of conscience seems to be connected with the lack of human feeling, lack of empathy, this is sort of pathological, isn't it? that you cannot even feel whether you are causing harm to others, pain and suffering to others, it doesn't matter to you. You are not able to put yourself in their position.

Clive: Isn't it true that even a relatively healthy person) someone who is fairly free from guilt, would appear to most people who are crippled with guilt to be quite insensitive and cruel?

S: sometimes the person who wants a lot of attention who is over sensitive will sometimes tend to criticize the healthy person as insensitive and lacking in consideration. This can certainly happen. Because their own demands are excessive.

Murray: It is interesting concept, someone being crippled by guilt, relating to someone as if they were a paraplegic or someone like that.

S: Yes you can be emotionally incapacitated almost, by feelings of guilt. You are desperate for affection you will do anything to get that anything [260] to avoid withdrawal of affection, you will go along with anything, do anything, even commit a murder in order to regain someone's affection.

Clive: so on the one hand, there is not a really a positive manifestation of guilt but on the other hand, excepting that it does exist in people you need in a way to work with it. I mean if people are going to do anything for your affection, then let it be something positive.

S: Yes, but eventually you have to wean them from that dependence upon your approval. If they don't get over that, they cannot grow up even, that is why one of the signs of growing up is very often that you do things that your parents disapprove, I don't just mean in the blind reactive way. But you do them because you just need to do them, because you are young and you are not quite the same kind of person as your parents. So you do those things and you feel sorry that the old folks are upset but you go ahead and do them nonetheless. Anyway lets have our coffee

Mike: you quite often see people doing this, trying to win Order Members and Mitras approval when they first come along.

S: Well you can see this, people desperately trying to do the right things in order to be ready for ordination and it is quite painful to see this, that in way, a person, in all sincerity is desperately trying to do the right thing, just so that they will be accepted and approved. They go through all the right motions, say all the right things, express all the right sentiments, but all for the wrong motive, they just want approval and very often they just cannot see this, even if this is explained to them, so they go through the motions sort of acting that they don't want approval even and so on.

Murray: It is almost as if the criteria for being is the fact that the people here have had a few good rows with Order Members (laughter)

S: It would be quite interesting to see how many people here been thrown out of communities, some people perhaps more than once.

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S: hm, yes become another little church. Just fade back into middle class life wherever they came from. An ex-Friend is Rajneesh's secretary she was very peripheral, she is Dutch and she used to go along to some of the retreats in Holland and she knew Vajrayogini and was an ex-girlfriend of Vajradaka's. So, I think he has met her since and talked with her.

Murray: He spoke to me about that and said that it was in India, he went and saw her and one of the things she said even though she is quite high up and she is signing all the papers for people's initiations by mail that one thing she had difficulty with was lack of friendliness. And she wasn't sure what to do about it. Vajradaka said that she didn't seem to understand metta very well, though in a sense she was immersed in the spiritual community supposedly, she really wasn't experiencing that.

S: Well she was just part of the administrative set up.

Pete: I have got a totally unrelated question, it is a sort of rider to the question that I asked last night, with regard to the male/female roles on the ladder so to speak, I was talking about this with Chintamani this morning and what I wasn't quite sure about was like presumably it is possible for a woman to go from artist to angel and so on without going through man (laughter)

S: In a biological sense, certainly, not without developing her undeveloped masculine side, just as a man cannot go from man to angel without developing his corresponding un-developed feminine side.

Pete: This is the point isn't it in what way then is the man in every respect on a higher rung so to speak than the woman?

S: Well because he is much more free from the pull of the biological.

Pete: Eh, that is fair enough but it is almost as if a man has got to go down to the rung below and back up again.

S: You mean with regard to the ape man business?

Pete: No with regard to his femininity. Going back to sort...

Clive: Male includes the female. The fact that you are male presupposes that you have been through the female stage ... the male on the ladder, you know, on the rung above.

Pete: I think there is a confusion between male and female and masculine and feminine.

S: Male and female is pretty clear, but the feminine and masculine are not necessarily quite so



neatly associated with male and female. But certainly a man in order to develop needs to develop that underdeveloped feminine side, but it doesn't mean going down, so to speak, to be a woman because a woman is not just feminine, but she is female plus feminine.

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Pete: Right, then looking at it the other way, does a woman have to become a man or develop the male things, as masculine thing before she can become the artist and so on.

S: It does seem as though a woman has to become a little bit male, not only masculine. I'll have to think about this a minute. You notice that in, well supposing for instance a woman decides in the interests of her spiritual development not to have children, well she then becomes more male, doesn't she? Because she is living and functioning then, even physically more like, in that respect, a male than a female.

Mike: There is even a biological theory that women "should" die before they are 30, definitely before menopause, that they are biologically designed, being a bit careful about words, that their function is to bear children, period, in an animal sense. Which means that they have their incubation period until they hit puberty, then they bear children, and die after they are no good at bearing children, in a sense. So that all these psychological problems that women hit at menopause are there because in a sense they shouldn't be alive any more at that point.

Fete: But you can argue a similar thing about men and getting old, you know if you were in the wild and maybe you were supposed to die about 50 when you were getting weaker and maybe you shouldn't

Clive: That is quite interesting though, it corresponds to spiritual death the woman, the female, dies at thirty and then the spiritual life takes over.

Mike: This is just one biological theory.

Clive: But thinking about that it seems like that does seem quite healthy in a way, that the woman does fulfil her female function and then just gets on with an uncomplicated life, uncomplicatedly with the spiritual life.

Mike: Have you noticed that Bhante, that if some women do have a child early on, that they are freer?

S: Well I think originally in the earlier days of the FWBO this was in a way my hope, that those women who had children and who became free of the urge to say have children, or when they're no longer were able to have children, say after 40 or 45 would then get into the spiritual life, but I actually haven't seen it happening. This maybe due partly to social reasons, I have discussed this sort of thing quite exhaustively with the women themselves and one of the things I have said to them is that for the woman at this stage the career is the near enemy. That many women at that sort of age will think more in terms of career than of personal development and they think in terms of career, partly out of unhealthy competitiveness with men or at [263] least comparison, self-comparison with men, they think in terms of career rather than in terms of higher personal development. So this hasn't really happened much. For instance we have got several older women in the Order the three older women in the Order that we had until very recently, I say until very recently because we have got two more older

ones in the Order now, who are in a different category, have remained very, very peripheral, that is to say Mallika, who had a career in Glasgow running the Arts Centre that was and so on, and who has now dropped out completely and hasn't written to anybody for about two years, Mamiki, who developed a career in Jungian analysis after being ordained and is in very little contact, and Vajrayogini who has her career in Gestalt Therapy and also we don't see very much. In the case of all three women, the career has definitely got in their way with their involvement with the FWBO and their own spiritual life. And recently there have been two older women ordained that is to say, Vajrasuri and Aniketa, that seems definitely not to be happening in their case. Vajrasuri seems to be giving up her career and Aniketa has never had one anyway, And doesn't particularly want one. I don't think I have ever heard her mention, well, her career has been housewife, she has brought up her four daughters and that is that. She is free and she is fully in the FWBO.

So it can happen, Vajrasuri has also had children, but so have all the other three women, they have all had children. So I say the career is the near-enemy of women at that stage of higher spiritual development. But anyway another point from a purely biological point of view, you could say that after the menopause women become biologically useless, whereas men remain biologically useful, let us say, for up to time of death in many cases, even up to the age of eighty So perhaps somebody could no doubt argue that women need not live beyond say, 35 or 40 whereas men could go on living indefinitely.

Murray: How do you measure biological usefulness?

S: Oh, just in terms of reproduction of the species. That is the basic criteria. Ability to reproduce the species. Women are not able to play any part in the reproduction of the species after menopause, but a man can go on playing a very active part until the very end of his life.

Murray: In relation to this I feel that I would like to introduce another category which is masculine, feminine and neuter. Quite often you hear people, see someone with a pink shirt on, they are trying to develop their femininity (laughter) People start doing the dishes more and stuff like that, but I think there are certain areas man or women... I mean if you cannot do the dishes perhaps brush your teeth, clean your own clothes and that, it is not a matter of having developed or undeveloped masculine or feminine, it [264] is just that you cannot look after yourself (laughter)

S: I think that one has to be very careful about this question about what are feminine and masculine activities. For instance washing the dishes, this is not necessarily a feminine thing to do. It is the sort of thing that in our civilization usually women rather than men have done, but there is no particular association of femininity with that. This is a gender association I would say, if you see what I mean. this is what is regarded as women's work in our society, but it has no essential connection with the quality of femininity at all. We have male dish-washers in hotels, don't we, very often; George Orwell was a dish-washer in Paris, so if one wants to develop one's femininity, one must go the right way about it. You don't develop your femininity by washing dishes, that is just a job, that a man can do, a woman can do, it has got no relation to ... It is the same with the pink shirt, well we regard pink as a feminine colour, probably the Chinese don't. The Tibetans regard green as a feminine colour, I don't think that we do.

Murray: Somebody told me that you had said, No one in the Order, no men in the Order, were

really developing their femininity as yet.

S: I have said something like that. I said it against a definite background and again this is something that I have discussed with the women, that is to say, their complimentary part, I have said that the conditions of modern life in the West are more favourable to women developing their masculinity than to men developing their femininity. Because if a woman wants to develop her masculinity, well she can get a job, go out into the world, be a bit competitive, aggressive, so she is already a feminine woman, she has got our whole social system gives her plenty of scope if she wants to go and do those sort of things which will develop her masculine qualities, but our society doesn't give men the corresponding scope to develop their feminine qualities. Because the whole of our society from a certain point of view at least, certainly our work life, is so much dominated by masculine values. So therefore women have got a better chance I think of developing their masculine qualities than men have got of developing their feminine qualities, it is more difficult for men in that sense to develop their feminine qualities under conditions of our culture and civilization.

Murray: So if a man was beginning to develop dhyana and meditation and get some sort of feel for the dakini aspect of the dharma, then he would be in fact be developing his femininity in the true sense

S: this is true, but of course our culture doesn't encourage you to do that sort of thing. You have to belong to something like the FWBO or go and away to a place like Vajraloka to do that. So women have got plenty of [265] facilities in the world for developing their masculine qualities, even quite rough ones, whereas men have got hardly any facilities in the world for developing their more feminine qualities.

Murray: This is reflected in our Men's communities, I have spoken to a few fervent feminists and they hold forth about women's communities and I just used to say, That is good, because we have men's communities, and they really dislike it.

S: Oh one of the women from the women's Movement did tell me that rather to her surprise, she had found that in the Women's movement they have got lots of communities, but the Men's movement, the Gay Liberation Movement, doesn't have any communities, and that rather surprised me and she said she herself found it surprising but they didn't have for some reason or other.

Clive: Do you think it is because it in the Gay Movements the sexes are completely polarized, the two characteristics are quite extreme, the women are very much centred around their community, and the men are very much wandering lone wolf types.

S: It could be.

Clive: I have got the idea that the masculine or a male is in some way is more advanced in the evolutionary scale than the female..

S: I think I know what you are getting at, in terms, in chromosome terms the male has got an extra chromosome, which the female doesn't have. Isn't this so?

Mike: He has got not an extra number, but a type that the female doesn't have, a Y

chromosome.

S: So in that sense, the male includes the female, he is not lacking in anything which the female has but she definitely lacks in chromosome terms something that he has, which is of course a quite important factor.

Mike: the only genetic difference in strict terms, is the sex cell the Female and male have pairs of chromosomes and the male has xy and the female has xx, which is a very rough description of the shape of the chromosome. And that is the key difference. And so when a pair couples it is just like random because as the cell splits in two, so the women produces an x half cell and an x half cell and the man produces an x half cell and y half cell So you have a fifty fifty chance of an x and a y merging, i.e. a male and an x x merging i.e. a female.

S: That's very neatly put. So clearly biologically i.e. Chromosomally speaking the male genetic set up does include the female genetic set up, but not vice versa.

Clive: So on that biological level, does it have repercussions on other [266] levels?

S: Well it does seem to, because what does that extra chromosome represent I mean what ... every chromosome sort of controls a certain type of development in the developing organism, doesn't it? So what is it that that extra chromosome determines in the male. It isn't just physical sex, but all those associated qualities, drive, and initiative and so on that the male animal exhibits more than the female animal.

Bob: Do you think that ... should women be attempting to develop their masculine side, because with men the feeling that I get is that we have to develop our masculinity first before we worry too much about our femininity, is the same true with women in that they should develop their femininity first before...

S: I think it would be undesirable for a, say a women who entered upon the spiritual life for her to be thinking of developing her masculine qualities if she was alienated from her feminine qualities, or female qualities would be better. I mean some women are alienated from their femaleness. Like those two French women I saw that I described, they were not just alienated from their feminine qualities, they were alienated from their femaleness, therefore from their bodies, so I think that for a woman to be alienated from her body is a much more serious matter, than for a man to be alienated from his body in as much as normally in the case of the woman the body and all that it represents in the way of childbirth and all that, looms so much larger in her life. So therefore I think say for a woman who came into the FWBO alienated from her femaleness would have to get back into her contact with her femaleness and then with her feminine qualities and then think in terms of developing the masculine ones, so as to achieve a balanced human individuality.

Bob: This could have quite serious practical implications because we have single sex businesses, so we have the same expectations of a women's business in purely like business terms because it requires a certain amount...

S: I think it is a mistake, I think ... I don't think that you can expect from say ordinary women even in the FWBO the same kind of drive that men have. I don't think that they can keep it up. Because I saw when they took over Vajrasamaya as it was, they were really happy playing

about with hammers and nails and paper for a few weeks, well couple of months, but they soon got tired of it, you just couldn't imagine them just carrying on, year after year as they had done at Sukhavati, as the men had done. I don't think, well I am sure they couldn't have done that. So I think that you cannot put women in the Friends in the kind of co-op which is very, very demanding. They think of it, I have studied them fairly [267] closely in this way, they think more in terms of a cosy, happy semi-family type situation and are not so much concerned with making money and so on, if they get on well with one another and are happy and get by, that is all that they want. (laughter) I discussed this with some of the women .what is this private joke?

Cieron: He didn't want it on the tape. (laughter)

S: Anyway I discussed this with some of the women at Sarvasiddhi, they strongly denied this. That is to say they denied, at least some of them denied, I shouldn't over-generalise, some of them denied quite vigorously that women lacked that drive. It was then that they said that women were really just as competitive as men, but I was unable to agree with that. If one is thinking of say, women in general, maybe the average women Yes there are a few women with drive, women with success in business, but more often than not they are not women who in addition to being feminine have also got masculine drive, there is sometimes women who are alienated from their femaleness and femininity and have got a neurotic drive, which is a different sort of thing. Obviously we cannot encourage that sort of thing in the FWBO, but I think that the co-ops if they are to be single sex co-ops and run only by women, I think they can, they have to be less demanding. They might have to be businesses of a different type, which are intrinsically less demanding, or you may have to accept that in the cases of the women's businesses there was a lower level of profit. Because they just not interested in going all out to make the money that is necessary, they don't get a kick out of that in a way that a man does. And I think that Kulananda has been putting his finger on this little point, recently, he started off this sort of discussion. But I have myself have been noticing that, I really felt it in the case of the Co-op which was started up in Norwich. It was like a ladies afternoon tea-party and they enjoyed doing it, but they were not all that much bothered that they were in debt, and all that kind of thing. The men were looking after that. So if you are not careful, this is something that I have said again, the women collectively become married to the men collectively and more or less supported by them, rather than becoming real individuals. Their co-op ticks over happily, they enjoy sort of working in it, they don't bother about making much profit, because after all well the men are making the profit, they will give the centre whatever it needs, so in effect the men are supporting the women.

Bob: But do you think that, do you see that as being a situation that we have to recognize and encourage and, because presumably, following the next step on to that, to a certain extent, the men have to provide women with a situation in which they can have a cosy afternoon...

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S: Well it had been said that, the point was made to me by some of the women that several of the businesses have been set up by the men for the women, that they haven't sort of set up themselves and that is one of the reasons .. the reference to Norwich. That is not altogether true, because Cushions were set up by the women and it petered out. I suggested to them that they revive it, it was a good little business, but it petered out, and a lot of the things that the women start up seem to peter out.

Mike: Spectrum decorators.

S: Right, yes. They don't have that, they settle down happily and comfortably in a semi-family type situation much more easily and happily than the men do.

Mike: It is interesting what you mentioned about Sarvasiddhi, because I had quite an explicit heated argument with one of the women from Sarvasiddhi who has made up two thirds of Friends Foods West London and it was in very definite contrast, and the real conflict came when I said that we should aim for a profit over a #100 per week, per person in Friends Foods, West London and this woman's attitude was no, no, it was really a question of \$25 per week per person to cover support and may be retreats. That was fine the rest was getting involved in big business competition. Just a complete difference in attitude.

Clive: Actually the women haven't got all of that because men's businesses can go a little like that too, they can start to get cosy.

S: No I wouldn't say that men's businesses start to get cosy, I think the danger with the men is that they can be bit whimsical and a bit flighty. I mean usually women are thought of as flighty, personally I think that men are much more flighty than women. For instance they can get fed up with the co-op that they are running, it is not exciting enough and not making enough money, so they can quite easily give it up and start something else. I think that is the danger with the men. Some of them are over-impatient and expecting too much.

Clive: There is another situation where they are not willing to put what it needs into the business because they have got so many other things that they want to do.

5: They have got so many other irons in the fire. The women broadly speaking in the Friends, have got very few irons in the fire, they probably do more meditation than the men do. Their retreats are really good, I know, they take them very seriously. So they look after that side of things very well, they are less enterprising, so that has both it's negative and positive sides. But I think the overall tendency is for the men to a great extent to [269] carry the women in the FWBO, broadly speaking. They wouldn't perhaps quite agree with that or even sort of like it, and there are some women who are definitely independent, and really individuals, but broadly speaking the mass of the women in the FWBO tend to be carried by the mass of the men, and that is why perhaps it is not all together a bad thing that there is a smaller number of women involved than men. You see what I mean? So this is why I have spoken in the past of the danger of the women collectively being married so to speak to the men collectively.

Bob: But do you consider that to be a positive situation, the fact that women on the whole in the Movement are carried by the men?

S: I think that on the level of the positive group it is OK. But on the level of the spiritual community well then there must just be individuals and a woman who becomes an Order Member would just follow the same ideals and the same standard of individuality as do the men.

Pete: It seems that the more developed they get, or you get, the less this chromosomal difference makes any difference at all. It seems that very strong women are also more developed.

S: Well as I said in reply to those questions, the further both men and women go up the evolutionary scale, yes, the less difference there is between them on the mental and spiritual level. I mean they are still distinct biologically, physiologically, but that matters less and less. But what one must beware of doing is because on the higher sort of rungs of the ladder, the biological differences don't matter, you can forget that on the lower rungs of the ladder, or while you are on the lower rungs of the ladder, the biological differences matter quite a lot and count for quite a lot, and therefore have to be taken into consideration.

Murray: So in fact this, move towards to Unisex, is really quite dangerous and alienating.

S: Yes it is quite dangerous and alienating, because unisex doesn't transcend sexual differences it merely blurs them. And you are left with neither men nor women, they have got neither masculine nor feminine qualities. They are just neuters.

Murray: There is a good case in point at the last Padmaloka Retreat, I was in a study group, and there were two men there who obviously had feminist leanings and they were completely out of touch with their masculinity or their maleness. They had rationalized to the point where you couldn't distinguish between maleness and female-maleness any more and they certainly didn't feel what it was to be a man.

S: Well I have talked with and read books written by people both men and [270] women so to speak, who really seem to believe that there are no differences whatever between men and women, the only difference is that there are a few little bits of skin which men have and women don't and vice versa and that is very superficial and shouldn't be allowed to count at all. To my mind that is suggestive of alienation. A man should be a man a woman a woman, yes all right, then having been that, you develop if you are the man more feminine qualities, if you are a woman more masculine and in that way you approximate to individuality and then you start becoming more and more like each other in a spiritual sense, but you remain biologically distinct.

Clive: in a way the unisex is the attempt to merge at too low a level. Which actually confuses and prevents any further development.

S: Yes, I think unisex is disastrous. I think it is not even desirable that men and women should dress alike really. In fact I always praise the women when they appear in skirts and tell them how nice they look and it is quite significant on the women's study retreat, so many of them were dressed in nice long frocks and things like that or at least or wearing them by the end of the retreat.

Murray: They say, "Bhante doesn't understand women" (laughter)

S: No I think it is only some men who say that, I don't think women really think that.

Mike: I was thinking that in many ways that unisex was like a reaction based on a sort of alienated insight into the fact that our culture the way that it treats the actual differences between men and women is sort of really quite sick, makes things important that aren't important, like the dish washing, and it makes unimportant those things that are important. And so it is like a reaction, suddenly seeing that all these things are not important and then going overboard and throwing out the really important things too.

S: Right, yes.

Clive: I think that in many ways you can see that a lot of the things that we try to do spiritually are actually a natural tendency for people but they haven't got the spiritual perspective, so they try, the things try to happen on a worldly level. You know it happens with unisex and I'm sure it happens with quite a few other things.

Mike: I have just thought of the example: these famous mutual criticism sessions in Communist Parties, they have these intense mutual criticism and self criticism sessions, but there is not the basis of metta. So there is a vast amount of reactivity and rationalization and subjectivity and [271] cruelty and demolishing of people and game playing and self-flagellation. (laughter)

v: which party is this? (laughter)

v: I quite like it. Get the rule book and introduce it to the LBC

Murray: The thing with the Unisex, it is one of the major Movements of our time. Personally I really get aggravated when I see elements of that appearing around the Friends.

Mike: Almost all the women around West London wear trousers.

Bob: What do the men wear? (laughter)

Murray: It seems that most of us recognize that women do wield some power. It is a lot more subtle than masculine power, men can be a lot more physically aggressive, but women seem to be a little more surreptitious, but they certainly have their influence.

Mike: In our culture most of their influence arises out of guilt, people don't grow up, it is based on men not being real men.

Murray: Speaking outside of the Friends generally in terms of sexuality that is the area where women have got men by the balls, quite literally. Most men are so addicted to that particular sense of pleasure that women can control a man by either giving or withholding that particular item which means it gives them tremendous power.

Clive: I had a funny experience which sort of symbolizes that perfectly, I was living in a house with several other people and we used to have quite raucous parties, and there was one of these week-end parties and I was in the kitchen on the phone, it was in the middle of the night, and everybody was crashing out, but one of the girls who lived in the house was having a relationship with a guy, and she walked into the kitchen and she had a peculiar look on her face, and as she came into the kitchen, he was leading this guy by his cock (laughter), he was completely naked and the look on his face was incredible, they just walked around the kitchen and walked out again. (laughter)

S: All this talk about sloth and torpor really seems to buck people up (laughter)

Murray: We were just talking about how women seem to have a lot of control over men generally.



S: Oh yes, because it is connected with this question of withdrawal of affection and there is the strong association of the woman, wife or girlfriend with the mother. After all they belong to the same sex. Your wife is of the same sex as your mother. And that has all sorts of repercussions and reverberations, and you are accustomed to get affection originally from your mother, if you haven't really outgrown that need, you are going to be very vulnerable to your wife, if you have got one. I myself have seen some really shocking cases of emotional dependence at this sort of level, it really opened my eyes. At one [272] stage of my career even, I wondered whether men could evolve spiritually at all, the emotional dependence seemed so terrible and so deep and so entrenched.

Clive: Do you think that the development of femininity through the practices that we were talking about, meditation etc., actually strengthens one's ability to withstand that kind of projection.

S: Well yes, except that I wouldn't put it in quite those terms, because in a way there is nothing to withstand any more. If you are complete within yourself, if you develop all aspects of your individuality, if you don't project, then you don't invest any part of your being in that projective way in another human being, therefore you are not dependant upon them. You are free and you can relate to them without depending on them.

Clive: You can do that you have experienced your, the femininity as being part of your own psychological make up.

S: yes I mean you don't become completely free from dependence on women because in addition to the psychological projection, there is also the sexual dependence. That is a separate question. But I think that it is the psychological projection, that is to say the projection of your femininity on to a member of the opposite sex, that reinforces the sexual dependence. I think if that psychological dependence is not there, the sexual dependence is relatively manageable, by a healthy human being.

Murray: Do you think that the other way around like going through a period of chastity you really can say overcome the biological dependence first, will that help overcome the psychological dependence?

S: No, I doubt that very much. I have known men who have been really fixated on women and who for some reason or other have not been able to form a sexual relationship, maybe the woman hasn't wanted it, so they have remained psychologically fixated and dependant.

Mike: In as much as say people aren't just that integrated even in the Friends and Order Members, who need some affection, would you say it is quite safe or safer than to seek that affection from one's own friends of the same sex.

S: I think that the need for affection is an objective need, it is more affection between friends, it is not one person being in totally dependant position and just receiving it from the other person and not giving any affection back as happens in the case of the baby. It is more a question of exchanging affection. I think that is a normal human need. But I think that under the conditions of our society in the West, usually you expect to get that from your sexual partner of the opposite sex. And that [273] makes for a very complicated situation. And you are not accustomed to looking for affection, not very overtly from someone of the same sex,

because in our society there has been until very recently this widespread fear of sex in relation to your own sex. So you are so afraid of sexual implications with a member of your own sex, that you even avoid expressing or receiving any affection from someone of your own sex, once you have passed a certain age, about seven or eight certainly; you are trained out of it even, and you are put on your guard against it in one way or another. So you have to look for affection to the woman, to your sex object, because that is what the woman is for most men. And that means that you become very vulnerable and there are overtones of mother. So here you are emotionally dependant and sexually dependant, perhaps neurotically in both cases, on another person, who has then got her own problems and needs and is therefore in a position to manipulate you, you are in a position to manipulate her, and in the end very often it is the person who is more dependant who has the edge in manipulation, and this is the famous relationship. And you can see it happening so clearly. You are dependant upon somebody else being dependant on you.

Murray: There is the whole aspect of feminist argument, that this society is a patriarchy, but in a sense I don't see it as being that, I tend to feel that the problem with the world isn't that the men are too strong, the problem is that the men are too weak.

S: Oh yes, I personally see it like that. In the West, the men are weak they are not strong. I think that again feminist women would strongly dispute, even hotly deny this, I think that part of the trouble with the women is that the men are weak, which is, .. doesn't mean that they have got to be muscle men or cave men or drag women around by their hair, but just give them collectively if not individually the security to fulfil their natural function. It is as simple as that.

Bob: That natural function being?

S: To produce children. I am talking about the mass, I am not talking about our few women in the FWBO, but women in the mass. If you say it is not their function, OK. well who is going to do it? Who is going to produce the next generation?

Clive: Women in order to feel that their position in relation to men is that the man is generally stronger on whatever way that may be, and in the Friends...

S: Stronger in the sense as bearing the ultimate responsibility. In case of a difference of opinion between them, he decides.

[274]

Clive: But what I am getting at is that in a society increasingly intellectual prowess so to speak is becoming the criterion and in this way a lot of women can be intellectually quite good if not sharper than men. And this often is another aspect of the relationship.

S: Well women can be better educated than men, but I think one has to beware how one uses the word intellectual. I mean we put at least too much value on education so an uneducated man might feel inferior to an educated woman, which is quite unnecessary. But that just means too much importance is attached to education, this is one the lessons of D.H. Lawrence, this was one of the...

End of side A

Clive: that women's strength can be even more reinforced by education, whereas in the Friends, where spiritual values are held as the highest, the natural sort of hierarchy begins to sort itself out, and even the educated woman can be low down the scale so to speak.

S: Or the educated man for that matter.

Murray: I tend to feel that one of the other great areas that is not seen by most people is that the women are just conditioning just about the whole population at the moment.

S: Yes, well, just so many women are teachers. You see dreadful things being done in schools in the way of Unisex education, it is really awful I mean boys are being pressured into doing domestic work, domestic science and all that sort of thing.

Murray: In New Zealand 75 percent of primary school teachers are women. So you leave home from your mother and you go straight into the hands of more women as a male child. Then you get to secondary school and you are brought up by so called "men", but most of those men have been trained by their mothers, so they don't know what it is to be a man either.

S: Yes, well this is again one of the points made very strongly by D.H. Lawrence, in some of his essays.

Mike: It is so extreme in the States even, it shocked my parents even, we spent a year there when I was seven and eight, and it is even more extreme there than England or Canada, because there it is way more than 75 percent, it is an oddity to see a male primary school teacher which takes kids up to age twelve or thirteen. And there is a high proportion of women teachers in the high schools...

S: Well no wonder you have got a matriarchy.

Mike: And even the Cubs were run by women.

S: When I was a boy, no self respecting Cub would have been run by a woman [275] or would have accepted a woman as a leader.

Mike: They saw every single activity that I got involved in as a child was run by women.

S: Well things are much worse than I thought they were.

Murray: So nominally, men run it in the sense that they have men's tuxedos and suits on sitting in the private positions, supposedly making the decisions, but even the Prime Minister gets a briefing in the bed room. (laughter)

Bob: But taking it back to specifically spiritual life, a picture would seem to emerge that women need men within the spiritual life, but do men actually need women in the spiritual life, couldn't we actually just ... (laughter)

S: I wouldn't like to be too confident, but I will say at least this, I think that the probability is that men would find it easier to manage without women than women would find it to manage

without men. Perhaps it is a difference of degree. But anyway you will all have an opportunity to see how we all get on for three months without women. Some of you might find it a bit difficult.

Bob: ...Laughter...

S: No I think that this is something that men can fall into, a cynical attitude towards women. I think that is really defensive, so I think that one has to be careful not to be just cynical, and not to look down on women in a negative sort of way, just try to see the situation objectively. And in fact not think too much in terms of superiority, inferiority at all. And certainly appreciate in women those qualities which really deserve to be appreciated.

Clive: The fact that they can get on with their retreats so well, meditate so well, is something that we should be aspiring to.

S: And they are also quite into study, I mean they are much less easily distracted than men are, I think. For them, there is only one big distraction, which is man. But for men, woman is just one among many distractions

Pete: What other distractions are there? I cannot think of any ...(Laughter)

S: What about sports and games? Women don't get into those, women don't play games on their retreats, probably a tiny bit of net-ball or something like that, but they are just not interested.

Pete: You think that that is a distraction.

S: Well it can be if one isn't careful. There are a lot of things that men can get really interested in apart from the spiritual life, I think that [276] for women that the possibilities are fewer. I have noticed say within our own Movement, that women are a definite compact solid little group, and they really do get on with things seriously, the way that the Women Order Members really look after the Women Mitras, and the care that they take of them, the time they spend discussing them, they are not impulsive, they are quite hard headed in a way, women, especially where people are concerned. And they do get really into their retreats, they have plenty of retreats, they really do get into their study, they have lots of study groups and their communities are quite nicely run, I mean you haven't been into them, not the strict ones anyway, I do have that privilege, and they are really nice, and their community life is quite positive. So they have got a very good scene going for themselves within the FWBO, while at the same time belonging to the wider movement. And they are very happy within the FWBO, I mean one of the women Order members said to me some time ago that she was really happy within the FWBO, because there was no pressure on her from men, that if she went outside, even if she walked in the street there was always pressure, she might get whistled after, or something like that, which she found really unpleasant, she says within the context of the FWBO, she is always just treated as an individual and she really appreciates that, so the women feel, having got over this whole question of single sex communities, which really upset them a few years ago, having got over that and accepted, and I think that women will accept anything if it is made clear that it is really with in their best own interests, they are told firmly that that is the situation, they will accept almost anything. Having got over that problem, they are really very happy within the FWBO, they really enjoy life within the

FWBO, and they really do unfold, and they really do make progress. And they are attracting more and more women from the Women's movement and one of them told me that she saw her involvement in Buddhism as a continuation of a higher level of her involvement in the Women's Movement because what got her into the Women's Movement was just a desire to be more independent, more of an individual and she is correcting some of the Women's Movement excesses through her involvement with the FWBO and she sees that, she sees that she was a bit one-sided before and she is very happy with the FWBO. So I think that any woman who has got her own best interests at heart as a woman cannot do better than to get involved with the FWBO. She is not hassled as a woman. She is treated as an individual. Everything is there, in the way of facilities for spiritual development. So if anything there is more in it for the women than for the men, on a sort of positive group level. I think that they are beginning to appreciate that. Some of them are certainly well aware of that. So we certainly [277] don't run down the women or look down on them in any way. But we just recognize objective differences. And perhaps in relation to co-ops, the majority of women are not going to go all out in the way that men might do, to make money that is needed for the Movement.

Clive: As the pressure for expansion gets stronger from the people involved then if the women are definitely better at looking after, a quite close situation where they can just get on in a friendly way, but there is not much expansion involved, then you can see the tendency that the women will start take care of the home, so to speak, the businesses that don't require much of a push, they are looking after the Centres etc., and the men will be going out getting in the cash.

S: Right, it is almost like a husband-wife relationship but in a collective sense, but that is all right on the level of the positive group.

Clive: You think that that is all right?

S: Yes, but I think where the spiritual community is involved, one must not let women get away with it, any more than you let men get away with it. One must insist that individuals are individuals, no concessions because you are a woman. No concessions. You have got to fulfil the same criteria as men, because it is individuality that you are concerned with, spiritual development that you are concerned with. So you are not going to be let off lightly because you are a Woman Order member. Unless you have got objective responsibilities in the form of children but you are not going to be allowed to get away with less effort and so on, just because you are a woman. That would be looking down on women.

Clive: I don't understand how that would work if the positive group is very positive but very polarized in that way, and then the Order members would work through the positive group, then the women Order Members are going to be working with people in a situation

S: Well actually what happens even at present, is that one or two of the Women Order Members function in a way more or less like men. They have got more drive not only than most of the other women, but also most of the other women Order members. They have achieved some measure of integration of the feminine and the masculine. Dhammadinna has got that, and in some ways she does function like a man. Unfortunately she is handicapped by poor health.

Mike: What about the question of a woman ever being Chairman of a centre?

S: Well we have had women as Chairmen of Centres. Gotami, Malini have been Chairmen.

Mike: But not really in recent times in FWBO terms. I know that Sagaramati [278] has been very clear that he kicked a great fuss at the thought of a woman becoming a Chairman in the last few years.

Clive: But he seems to kick up a great fuss about women in every way.

S: I must say they didn't do badly. I must say that Gotami did quite well organizationally, she suffered though, she didn't treat herself kindly. She lived on coffee and biscuits for weeks on end and didn't look after herself. Objectively she ran the Centre, which was very small quite well. Malini was in a quite difficult position when Vajradaka suddenly decided that he didn't want to be Chairman any more and didn't go back. So she was more or less forced to take it on, and I must say she rose to the occasion quite well and did what she could. But when the Centre gets bigger and more active and more drive is needed, it probably would be quite difficult for a woman to take on that. But we cannot rule out an exceptionally gifted woman doing it. In principle we don't rule it out.

Cieron: Wouldn't it be more likely that we would throw up those kind of women say if the men split off a little bit from the women. Like what we have felt at the LBC, in the Pure land Co-op the women in it aren't as aware of the financial situation as say the men, because the men are supporting them in ways, and we felt that if we sort of split ourselves off a bit more, they might become aware of that and actually start doing

something about it.

S: Well no, they wouldn't have any need to because if their co-op was an independent co-op, they would be meeting their own expenses and wages, and having an easy going time and not bothering about contributing any funds in the form of donations to the nearest centre. They haven't got a women's Centre to donate to. It just wouldn't work like that.

Clive: What about a Women's Centre set up by women. One or two of the women's libbers are a bit interested in that. Lets see if it comes off. There is a lot of talk about it, but not much. I think most of the women don't like the idea, most of the women are a bit uneasy at the idea of being separated from men to any extent. They have accepted the women's communities and all that, and women's co-ops to some extent, but they do really most of them, leading aside lesbians or feminists on principle, they feel quite uneasy about being too far away from the men.

Bob: The women around the LBC state quite explicitly that they don't feel they get enough contact with the men.

S: Of course they do talk about spiritual contact, but I think that is a bit of a rationalization where most of them are concerned But it is true that some of the Women Order members in the past have really needed [279] contact with more experienced men Order members just because that kind of Order member was not found among the women. Some of them suffered and I remember one of the women Order members one the more experienced ones saying

what a relief it was for her one evening to just go along to the pub with Nagabodhi, Buddhadasa, and maybe it was Subhuti-and just have a good chat about things and not feel the responsibility of all the other women weighing on her shoulders, feeling that here was some strong fellow Order members that she could really relate to and get something from, so you cannot deprive those women Order members of that sort of contact. They really need it. But when women in the ordinary sense start to say, "Well we don't want to move too far away from the men, we want spiritual support from them", in their case I think that you have got to be a bit wary.

Murray: What about when you start getting complaints that you are not being friendly and that, it seems to me...

S: Take it as a compliment. I don't think that men should be too friendly with women, in the sense of always out to please them. Be kind, and be gentle and tactful, but not create an impression that you are out to please them, or if they happen to be around then automatically they are the main centre of your attention. No, they are just around. You don't have follow them around with your eyes wherever they are moving, but they accustomed to that. They have to get used to not having that within the FWBO, having a more positive situation than that, in the end they do realize that it is for their good. If you are firm, they will accept it. But if you waiver they will exploit you for all you are worth.

Murray: when that came up I just didn't feel like being any more friendly I thought I was being friendly enough.

S: You've probably been far too friendly in your day. (laughter)

Anyway perhaps we ought to get back to the text. Perhaps we had better leave it there and just clear up any loose ends and ...

keep the remaining verses for Tuscany ... Oh but there is another day, so we'll do some more verses tomorrow. Anyway any loose ends?

Andy: Right mindedness would be sort of Right View or Mindfulness?

S: No it is more like a right volition. It is more like a right attitude. It is a somewhat active term. Sammasankhara? is of course the second stage of the Noble Eightfold Path. Perfect Emotion. Perfect Motivation. Right Mindedness suggests something more like that.

Andy Right orientation?

S: Right orientation, not just of one's mind, but of one's whole being. Right orientation of one's whole life, especially of one's emotional life [280] emotional energies, that is orientation in the direction of the vision, or Perfect Vision. You have the Perfect Vision, that is the first step of the Eightfold Path, then you orientate all your energies, especially emotional energies, in that direction, that is the second step.

Andy: So all the time you sort out your priorities.

S: Yes, first there is the vision, then there is the energies flowing in that direction, and then

those energies as they flow in that direction manifest in various ways, in the form of your perfect speech, your perfect activity, your perfect means of livelihood, and that all affects your mind, you are able to make a perfect effort, mobilize all your deeper seated energies, and eventually become mindful and attain complete mental integration and equilibrium. In that way you traverse the whole path.

It did occur to me just a little while ago, which doesn't follow on from here, but it might be interesting if some people when in Tuscany keep a diary or journal for themselves, especially writing up their thoughts, feelings, reflections from day to day. and maybe a note of things that distracted them. This could be quite useful later on, to refer to, to recall things, see how you have got since then and so on...

Mike: there is a quite unrelated question: it is about the value of learning Pali. I remember that you said yes, but you said that it should not be really scholastic, I didn't pick up much enthusiasm from you for people really learning it.

S: Well it just what I have seen happening to those people who have taken it up, they have become distinctly peripheral, in fact we have almost sort of lost them for practical purposes. For instance there is Dharmajyoti from New Zealand, he was a Chinese, he was really committed to the FWBO, and he went off but we hardly hear from him. He just got more and more absorbed in his studies of Pali, Sanskrit and Chinese. And there was another Order member in the early days who took up Sanskrit and got more and more involved and he did resign. That is why I am a bit reluctant to encourage people to get involved in the study of Pali and Sanskrit, to go to University, to do that sort of thing.

Mike: Maybe it is a question of encouraging people who have no natural tendency in that way. At least half of what I have got out of this study is your understanding seems to be directly related to knowledge and understanding of the original language.

S: To some extent it is, particularly things out of the Pali Scriptures, it's because I can consult the original, though I cannot claim to know Pali really well, I know enough to be able to do that.

Mike: Half the time in the last few months, I mean in our community study on the Songs of Milarepa, there is [281] so much that hangs on as it is poetry, the interpretation of phrases and words...

S: Well that is actually quite a bad translation unfortunately, in the sense that the translator however well he may have known Tibetan does not have an adequate command of English. So we really need another better Translation and we need to be able to track down certain important Tibetan technical terms and know what they really mean in Tibetan, to get the full meaning of Milarepa's sayings. I don't know Tibetan unfortunately, I know just a few words, phrases and technical terms, but very often taking study groups on the Songs of Milarepa, I have to just to take the general meaning, I cannot go into it very technically, unless of course I recognize certain Sanskrit technical terms or their equivalent. Sometimes the translation is so rough, that you cannot be sure what were those original terms.

Murray: It seems to me in certain respects, it is not necessary because you have already done it, it is all on the tapes...



S: Well the main things I think I have done, but one of the ideas I had recently if ever I really get the time, is to go systematically through the whole Pali Canon and just sort of extract all those passages and teachings which are relevant to us and which really do need to be properly brought out and located, so that people know exactly where to go in the Scriptures for those key passages.

Murray: That would be really good, and also it would be good if you finished translating the Dhammapada.

S: Yes I want to do that...

discussion ensued on possible activities at Tuscany.

End of tape 14

All right on to verse 281: "Watchful of speech, well restrained in mind, let him do no evil in deed; let him purify the Path made known by the Sages."

Vacanurakkhi, manasa susanvuto, kayena ca akusalan na kayira; ete tayo kammapathe visodhaye; aradhaye magga isippaveditan.

Anyway this is also is a sort of summary of the Buddha's teaching, a summary of the path, 'watchful of speech', literally guarded in speech, 'well restrained in mind' or 'well controlled in mind', let him do no evil [282] in deed, let him do nothing unskillful, that is the literal translation, let him purify these three ways or paths of action and win the Path made known by the Sages. So this verse is concerned with speech mind and body. Watchful of speech, guarding speech, what does that mean or what does that involve? How does one guard one's speech?

Murray: Mindfulness

S: It goes back to what we were talking about the other day, about guarding the gates of the senses. It is not the senses that are spoken of but the three paths of action, as they are sometimes called, body, speech and mind. Do you think it is easy to guard speech? What do you think peoples attitude to speech really is? Do they really watch every word? Is it good that they should do so

Murray: Well the mass of people certainly don't watch every word, you just say what you feel like.

v: Just what comes into your head.

S: Sometimes you check yourself of course, but that might be just due to fear, or shyness or something; of that sort.

Murray: It is good that you can change speech because through speech you set up all sorts of changes of circumstances and if that what is setting up the change is out of control, it doesn't say much for the direction of your life.

S: Speech is very easy. Speech is very light, so because it is very easy one thinks or tends to think or tends to assume that speech doesn't have much in the way of consequences. Action is different, it is a bit more difficult, a bit more arduous, requires more preparation, but just to speak, just to say something is so easy, so it is as though if you say it it doesn't matter, but speech does in fact have tremendous consequences. You can really upset someone, you can really make them an enemy for life with just a few words, that you might have spoken very thoughtlessly, very unthinkingly. So though apparently so light and easy, speech is, can have tremendous consequences. So all the more reason for being watchful of speech, guarding one's speech.

Clive: What tends to happen is that if you say something thoughtlessly, then you think because you have said it, then you start defending what you have said.

S: Yes, and you might say something without thinking about it. Someone might challenge that, and you might not really think what you said, but when someone challenges it well then you are put on your mettle as it were, and you feel because you have said it, even though you don't really [283] agree with it, on second thoughts, because you said and your honour or prestige is at stake, you have to defend it. And that gets you into all sorts of complications, and you may end up almost sort of strongly committed to an attitude or to a position or to an idea that you don't really hold, that is publicly committed, all because of a few careless words. For instance, it is a quite well known phenomenon, this is a slightly different example, a quite well known phenomenon in FWBO circles, especially in connection with council meetings, the question is put who will do such and such? who will make such and such arrangements? somebody says "Oh, I will," they just come out automatically, but then studying the minutes, of meetings month after month, you discover that that person has never actually done that particular thing, they have committed themselves, well, their mouths just open and those words just thoughtlessly flew out, without them realizing really what they were saying what they were committing themselves to do. And then afterwards they discover what they had committed themselves to or promised to do, and they don't really like that and they try to get out of that, because they are really unwilling, the job isn't done. This sort of thing happens time and again, doesn't it. It is so easy to just speak a few words thoughtlessly. Or someone will say "Well I will commit myself to that situation, sure, for the next six years! ", just like that, a few weeks later they have changed their minds. It is so easy to do that kind of thing. "Oh yes, I'll stand in for you, I'll give the lecture for you". but you don't realize what that involves, so when you start thinking about that afterwards, you start realizing what it does involve, and then you wriggle and try to get out of it, having actually promised.

So, watchfulness also involves of course, thinking before you speak, considering your words, weighing your words, and especially with regard to your promise. Once you have promised to do something you should never break that, therefore you should not lightly give your promise. Never promise something that, unless you are absolutely sure that you are able to do, barring death and accidents. If you say you will do something, people should have the confidence that you will definitely do that unless you are actually dead, or physically incapacitated, but otherwise you will definitely do it, and you can be relied upon. Otherwise in any organizational activity, nothing is more annoying than to have people promising to do things, and saying that they will do things and then next time you have your meeting, they say, "Well, I'm sorry, I forgot", or "I didn't do it" and they give a silly laugh as though it is a clever thing to have done. This is the sort of thing that one finds.

So guard one's speech. be careful of what you say. Don't give promises lightly, don't take on responsibilities lightly. [284]Your word should be your bond. Anything more about that?

Murray: It seems to me that there is one difficulty arises in terms if you are fragmented, in terms of integration, you may say something and then over the course of a year, you become much more integrated, and at that point in time, the things that you have said from a much less integrated level, you think "Oh, did I say that?" It is not so easy to fulfil one's word in those circumstances.

S: Well if you know that you are not integrated in that sort of way, then you should be very careful of what you promise and not commit yourself for years and years ahead, only a really integrated person can do that. I mean those who are not Order Members, should not commit themselves for certainly not six months ahead, even Order Members should think very carefully before committing themselves to more than a year ahead. Two years perhaps would be the limit, unless for exceptionally well integrated persons. Because you don't know what you will be thinking of doing in so many years time.

Mike: When I moved into Sukhavati, I had been a mitra for a few months, and after a month at Sukhavati, I was asked to commit myself for at least a year. I mean it worked quite well, actually. That had arisen out of the situation there, too many people walking in and out.

S: Just committing yourself to live in a particular place is a lesser form of commitment in a way. I was thinking of more commitment to responsibilities and things that you will do. But I am not really in favour of mitras being asked to commit themselves to anything. I have been discouraging the use of the word commitment, in connection with mitras, because commitment is used as a synonym for going for Refuge. So that is really something very serious. I have been suggesting that in connection with mitras, that involvement should be used rather than commitment. Or one can speak of a simple promise, but the average mitra who is making a sincere effort does go through all sorts of changes even upheavals, maybe he has given up his job, maybe he has moved out of his home, so when he is in that sort of position, maybe in some turmoil even, it isn't really fair to ask him to commit himself for months and even years ahead. That is in a way asking for trouble, because if you ask a mitra, or even press a mitra, which you should not do, to commit himself to a certain place or responsibility for years ahead, well the likelihood is that he will agree, because maybe he feels that you know better, you are the Order Member, Order Members, and maybe he wants to please you even, so he says "OK, yes, I'll do the job for the next couple of years," but then what will happen supposing that it does turn out that it is not the best thing for him, or resistance [285] builds up in him against that, well then he will start feeling very uneasy and unhappy, uncomfortable in that job, but he will be thinking, "Well I have committed myself and if I withdraw now, the Order Members will not be very pleased with me, maybe they will think that I am unreliable, maybe I won't get ordained, "so he pushes on none-the-less. But it isn't the best thing for him. Maybe eventually when he cannot stand it any more, and he just suddenly says, "I'm sorry, I'm going, I won't be coming in on Monday morning" and then perhaps they are really surprised but it was then to some extent due to their own unskilful behaviour in expecting you, as a mitra, still in a state of turmoil, perhaps, to some extent, to be able to commit yourself in that sort of way. So with regard to mitras, broadly speaking, things should be left quite open and certainly no mitra should be in a position of real responsibility. I don't think that is desirable at all, though I know that it sometimes happens. Even a very young, new Order Member shouldn't be given any real responsibility. When I say

real responsibility, I mean responsibility that involves looking after other people, or being responsible for other people, as well as for oneself and own -?-. Sometimes there has been a bit of pressure because various centres, communities and co-ops are short of people, but one shouldn't get into a habit ever of putting too much on to the mitras, they need to have in a sense, a pretty easy time for a while, especially if they have come from demanding jobs. I heard recently of a case, which I am not too happy about, though I don't really know the details, someone was holding down an accountants job, and he gets involved with the Friends and as soon as he gets involved, he becomes an accountant within the Friends, well that may not be the best thing. It may be that he will be perfectly happy to do that, I don't know, but at first sight I would have thought that that wasn't the best thing for him to do. But maybe an accountant is really is needed, so one thing has to be weighed against the other. But one shouldn't ever lose sight of that principle, that mitras and new young Order Members in a sense should have, I won't say an easy time, but a time free from real responsibility, that I think is something that one has to grow into as one becomes spiritually more mature and just more experienced in ordinary human terms.

All right, obviously one has to observe the precepts with regards to speech, and not indulge in speech which is untruthful or malicious etc. But watchful of speech... there are probably two extremes here, one is the extreme of just saying whatever you think. just prattling away thoughtlessly. There is a little story I tell in this connection, a story about a woman I'm afraid, don't know why women always seem to come into these stories... this woman used [286] to do a lot of knitting and she was asked why she did so much knitting, and she said, "Well, I do it to give myself something to think about while I am talking" (laughter) So you mustn't be like that, on the one hand, not just prattle away thoughtlessly. On the other hand not be tongue tied, out of shyness or embarrassment, and so on, so that you cannot even say those things that you want to say, and which really need to be said and perhaps should be said. Those are the two extremes.

Bob: is there room in ... for white lies?

S: Well what is a white lie?

Bob: It is an untruth spoken without any unskilful motive behind it. (laughter)

S: Is that possible? can you give an example?

Bob: Well in business for example,...

S: I've got a feeling that I have heard all this one in India...

Mike: There is the case from the Buddha's own life though, isn't there?, his cousin taking him away from his wedding and sort of ... if I remember the tale, even if he doesn't explicitly say, it is very implicitly sort be taking him away for an hour or so, instead of permanently taking him away to turn him into a monk.

Clive: He promises him dove-footed maidens, which is actually.

S: Well he did achieve the dove-footed nymphs and he got fed up with them. The Buddha gave everything that he promised. No, the point that is being made is that the Buddha on

leaving the marriage feast said to young Nanda, please carry my bowl for me, and so took the Buddha's bowl and followed the Buddha as he made his way back to his hermitage, but the Buddha, after, instead of taking it after a certain distance, though he hadn't promised to do so, it doesn't say that, he just went on walking and walking, and was just following, getting further and further away from his newly wedded wife, deeper into the jungle, I think that is so, I hope I am not elaborating, got deep into the jungle, and when he had got right there he just calmly turned round, took the bowl from Nanda, the bhikkhus closed in on him, and the Buddha said, "Get him ordained "(laughter) I don't think the Buddha uttered a white lie, he didn't actually say "Just carry my bowl a short distance, he didn't actually say that, may have understood that, or thought that, but that was his misunderstanding, he ought to have known that you mustn't assume that you understand the Buddha or you can fathom the motives of the Enlightened Mind. He should not have assumed that. So white lie? A real example? [287] One example is sometimes given that someone comes to the door, and he wants to see you and you tell somebody to tell him that you are busy. You don't want to hurt their feelings by saying that you don't want to see them, you just say that you are busy or even you ask someone to say that you are out, I can assure you this is something that I don't do, if Subhuti tells you that I am out, well I am out, (laughter) or if he tells you that I am busy, well yes, it really means that I am busy, I am not just flicking my fingers as it were. But that is an example of a white lie. So one does have in social and business life, these white lies, but I don't think that they are ever completely unskilful. There will be some greed, or fear or some such unskilful motives. In business, what they usually say is you have to tell white lies otherwise you couldn't be in business at all, that you couldn't succeed, you'd be out on the street a pauper if you didn't tell a white lie every now and again. That may well be true, but Buddhists would say then well you ought not to be doing that kind of business. If the business is of such a nature that inherently and intrinsically it requires you to indulge in wrong speech, then you shouldn't be involved in that. Again other people say maybe people in the same line of business, you do not need to be dishonest. You don't need to tell white lies.

Clive: When you are handling, dealing with people with imperfect minds then you have got to deal with them on their own level, to a certain extent if you want to get things done.

S: But does that necessarily involve telling white lies?

Clive: Rather it might be skilful to tell a white lie.

S: it depends on your use of the word skilful, in the sense of obtaining results, it may not be skilful in the sense that it would represent an element of greed, or fear, in your own mental state. Greed in the sense that maybe you wanted to make a profit and have a successful business.

Clive: Yes, but there is in a way a balance. Lets say for instance you are working in a Friends situation, Right livelihood with people with varying levels of awareness and commitment and in order to get some things done for the benefit of the business which, not solely with the motive of making as much money as possible with the general success of the business, then sometimes you are going to have to do things, say things that are white lies.

S: Well I still haven't had a concrete example.

Bob: I occasionally for example in the course of our work in S London, claim to know

nothing about something, "I'm sorry about that, but I only work here" when actually I know when dealing with tenants, someone starts bending my ear about something, so I say "look, I'm sorry I don't know any [288] thing about it, I am only the builder, you will have to ring them up", when in fact I know quite a lot about it, but don't want to get involved.

S: But you could quite easily say, "Well I am sorry I am not the responsible person", which would be true.

Pete: What is the difference?

S: Well if you say "I don't know" and you do know, well that is a lie. If you say, "you are making a mistake in approaching me, I am not the person responsible, so and so is the person who is responsible," well that is true. When you say, "I don't know anything about it" what you are really meaning is I am not the responsible person, but technically you have told a lie. So I don't think that you need to.

Bob: And another occasion on which I find myself doing it is, pleading ignorance to at least give my-self space to sort out my thoughts and ... and if someone catches you out, "what about so and so?" I say "Oh I don't know anything about it, I'll have to check it", when in fact I know that I have forgotten all about it.

S: Well you could say in that instance "I just have to think about that a bit". or "I'll just have to sort out my thoughts about that".

Bob: I think that you can say that to people within the Friends, but it is not quite so easy to say that to people outside. It is as though they would rather hear...

S: Well perhaps they have come to expect the white lie, they probably know that it is a white lie.

Bob: I think that the world does operate like that, and you go through this elaborate ritual of exchanging white lies.

S: I don't think it is really necessary, I think that one can phrase things a bit differently and stick to the truth.

Murray: What about if you had said, "I am not the person responsible" and that statement is true because, you are not responsible because you are being irresponsible because you are not taking responsibility.(laughter)

S: If you are only the builder, yes, the bloke who is being paid to do the job, so you are not responsible, you are just carrying out orders, you are acting in a subordinate capacity. In law you are the servant of the person who is employing you. So you are quite rightly saying "I am not the person responsible", "you will have to approach the responsible person" and then that would be completely truthful.

Mike: There was a quite different case actually in Friends Foods, we ... the explanation is slightly convoluted and that was the reason that we [289] couldn't give the explanation to customers, because they wouldn't stand the...

S: What was that?

Mike: We were going to put up our prices when we opened the shop in Notting Hill Gate because it is a more expensive neighbourhood and we had to pay rent and all the rest, and there was discussion as to two prices levels, one for the market stall in Hammersmith Grove and one for the shop and in the end we decided that we would just have one price level: it is more convenient, that people going to both would wonder why there were two prices. And then we decided shall we wait until we open the shop before moving in or when we moved in, and decided we will do it earlier so as it is out of the way. But then the problem arose well what do you tell the customers when they come up and ask you, can you run through this whole rigmarole, and explain it to them or do you just tell them that our costs have gone up?

S: Well you can say that our overall costs will be going up, you can truthfully say that, because they will be as soon as the shop starts functioning.

Clive: But then the customers can quite rightly say "well you shouldn't put the price up until the shop opens".

Pete: But you have already put yourself in debt already, so you could actually say that your overheads have already gone up without stressing the point too far.

S: The gross overheads of the whole operation of which the market is only part have gone up, so there has been no change in the situation there, but those prices have had to go too, but that may get you involved with more words than you want with each customer. So probably it wasn't the right decision from that point of view to put the prices up before hand. I would have said that .

Clive: you could put a notice up.

Mike: Well that tends to draw the attention of the other customers who haven 't ... (laughter) 3

S: I think that probably you should have waited. But what I am saying is that you don't have tell the white lie. People usually say that "I had to do it", but actually no that is not the case . You have chosen to do it f or certain reasons, maybe sound or unsound. But I think very often if one thinks a bit and rephrases what one says, one need not tell a white lie.

Johnny: In the situation where somebody asks you, say someone has phoned for them, and they are continually being harassed, people being phoned [290] up all the time and you say "I'm just not in", they ask you...

S: No you don't have to say that he is not in, "he is not available" which is true, he is not available.

Clive: But then anybody on the other end would say, "What do you mean by not available? Is he there or isn't he?"

S: So you say "he is there but he is not available, he is not able to answer the phone, he is busy, he is talking to somebody etc. You are not the only person in the world my dear" (laughter) Women say that there is a free-masonry among men, that if a wife rings up to ask

if, whether her husband is in fact working at the office, there is an unspoken code of among men to always to cover up for the other bloke, that might involve a white lie, well no, it would just be a lie.

But the classic example of the white lie, is the case of the person who is very seriously ill and dying perhaps and they ask the doctor "Am I dying?" and the doctor says "oh, no you are not dying" The medical justification they say that if you were to tell the person that yes you are dying, that might give them, or would give them a shock and might even have a bad effect on them and counter-act any slight remaining chance that they did have of recovering.

Johnny: But it also might prepare them for death.

S: Well there is that too. In that case well it is very doubtful if that white lie is really necessary. A doctor doesn't have to say, "Yes you are going to die", he doesn't really know sometimes, he could at least say, "well there is that possibility, that we have to bear in mind, but we hope, we are working and doing everything that we can to ensure that you don't die, but it is something that you should be prepared for"

Clive: In a way that implies a degree of emotional stability and individuality in the person, in the patient, because most people are quite frightened of death, and it would just freak them out completely and even if you said "well there is a possibility that you are going to die, but we are working against it" they'd take it that they were definitely going to die.

Pete: But there is a possibility also, that they might fight against it. Stimulate a resistance, it might have a good effect.

Clive: But given that a lot of people are not in a positive state, they would just go under, quite a lot of people.

Cieron: But skilful speech wouldn't exclude things like tact, discretion and things like that, I think that those are different from white lies.

S: A white lie is a lie. Whereas I think that one can be tactful and discrete [291] and at the same time not tell a lie. Why does the doctor tell the white lie in those circumstances? That is a classic situation, but why does he say that apart from the justification that I mentioned, but why do they keep on assuring the patient, you are going to get better.

Cieron: It saves themselves from having to deal with the scene.

S: So it is that too, because it puts the doctor on the spot, which is not easy, not only just to have to tell somebody that they are going to have to die, even if you definitely know it and even if there is no hope at all, but then you have got to, yourself cope with that situation, it makes it easier for you to just go on giving people reassurances, knowing full well that they have no hope of living.

Mike: It brings up the problem too of the whole thing of taking responsibility for oneself. There are too many doctors in the role where people, they let people dump responsibility on them. In a way they cannot of course take the responsibility for the other person in the crunch situation.



S: Well one does hear quite often of cases where people have begged to tell them the real truth, they would rather know if they were going to die and the doctor didn't tell them.

Andy: In that case the doctor is treating the patient not as a human being but as an object.

S: Well as a child at least.

Andy: The job has become more important than helping the actual person.

S: Well it is like these induced child-births, recently, child birth being induced so that women can have their babies at a time convenient to the nursing staff. Where there is a severe shortage of nursing staff, perhaps that might be a justification, but it did seem in some cases that it had become a routine, regardless. "We are going to have all our deliveries on Tuesday afternoon, so I'll take Tuesday morning off", sort of thing. So the children were induced for Tuesday afternoon.

Pete: I was induced in time for lunch.

S: Was it as long ago as that? Oh I was thinking that it was a comparatively recent thing, ... I think that we have to question this concept of the white lie even to the extent of doubting whether there is any such thing, in a sense of a harmless glossing over of the facts. I think the difficulty that if you start telling white lies, you just get into the habit of not speaking the truth, of being careless about the truth, I think that is the danger.

Pete: I can understand that idea of not practising telling lies, but it [292] seems somehow that when you say if you say some-thing in such a way it is not technically a lie, it seems to me that you are kind of playing with words and like it might not technically be, but there is in a sense an intention to deceive,...

S: Well sometimes the situation is that you cannot tell everybody everything which is because there would be no end of it. For instance in the case that Bob mentioned, well if he says well no, I am not the person responsible well that is true, and that is enough, there is not point in going into a complete exposition of your relationship as the builder with that particular employer, you are not actually holding back that information, it is not relevant, the person has no right to know it, what they want to know is who is the responsible person, who must they complain to or apply to. You are not telling a lie by holding back information which is in fact no concern to that person in that situation.

Clive: But the implication of what Bob said is that he doesn't know the information, the persons who are asking him something and he is saying, "I am not responsible" in saying in such a way, maybe he is walking off at the time, and the implication is that he doesn't know.

S: Well the person is not just asking for information, they are asking for information so that they can get something done, or make a complaint; well, he is not the proper person for that. He is only the builder. See what I mean?

Bob: nevertheless, if I were to phrase it in such a way that on a moment's reflection that although I was not responsible personally, but I did have the information, then I could be pressed for the information, which brings another area in to this speech thing, it is not so

much white lies, but if you are in the possession of information that may be somebody else's confidence or it may for example be Order business, that has some direct bearing on the conversation you are having with someone, if you are not able to introduce that factor because of your confidence, you could argue that it is not a white lie, but it is something else that isn't...

S: Well I think that people generally have to respect other people's confidentiality. For instance, you haven't got the right say to expect a Doctor to give you information about his patient. You haven't got the right to expect a lawyer to give you information about his clients. Suppose you are just having a chat, and you happen to know those people, well in the course of conversation, the doctor has to remember that he is in the professional confidence of the people about whom you are talking and he cannot introduce facts which he acquires in the course of his professional life, into general conversation. He would be quite justified in disclosing [293] them to say, a consultant physician, or to a barrister in pursuance of his work on behalf of that person, but not just into general conversation. So, if for instance you are asked by ... supposing you are an Order Member and you are asked by somebody what transpired at a certain Order Meeting on such and such matter, even if they were personally interested, you would be justified in saying "Well, I am not in a position to tell you" If it related to them, you could say, "Well you had better go and apply to such and such Order Members, they were the persons concerned, it is up to them to satisfy your curiosity or not, but I am not in the position as the third party to do that" One should be quite open in this sort of way.

Pete: Yes, in ordinary life, you are not always at liberty to say what somebody else has said to you.

S: So I think that has to be recognized in society, but that you don't have absolute right to all information under all circumstances. So therefore you are not justified in pressing another person for information in that way. The other person is justified in resisting you if you do. So he doesn't have to tell a white lie, he just has to remind you of the fact that you do not have a right to that sort information and you should have the strength of mind to do that and not Just evade the issue with a white lie.

For instance, if a man comes up to you and says to you, "Is it true that my wife is being unfaithful to me?" Well, you may happen to know, but you are justified in saying "Well, I am sorry that is not the sort of question that you ought to be addressing to me, I suggest that you sort it out with your wife directly".

Mike: But that can be an answer in itself. Because he will assume that if you say no, that means yes.

S: But he shouldn't put you on the spot in that way.

Clive: But the fact that he has done, and people will do, then you are in that position.

Pete: It seems that to be neutral you'd have to tell a lie.

S: You cannot be neutral. The fact that he questioned you, means that you cannot not be involved in be situation. But he has got no right to think that he can force you to answer. You

can say "Go and ask your wife, I am not the person to ask", or "ask the man that you think that is involved, it is not me ". I think people shouldn't allow themselves to be pushed into a corner as it were. Just point out what is the principle involved. That this is not something that you should be asking me, go and ask the proper person. Sometimes people come to me and say "What did so and so say about [294] me? and I almost always say. "well you just go and ask them, don't take it from me, go and ask them, why ask me, I may know, but why should I have to tell you, you go and ask them, then there is less danger of a misunderstanding". Otherwise you tell them, "so and so said such and such" then, he goes and says to them and says "So and so says that you said such and such about me", well that other person is angry as that the first person knows what he said about them, and he is annoyed with you because you have told then he will try to deny to some extent, then the person who went to him comes back to you and says "Well he didn't really say that, he said something different, you have misunderstood," then that other person gets at you allegedly for not saying what he actually did say, etc. etc. So it is much better to just not repeat things in that way and say "Go and ask him, if you want to know". It saves a lot of trouble, that is what I have found.

Mike: On the other side of the coin in a sense there is this habit of social lubricant of white lies, and thoroughly unwhite lies, conditions us basically to see an element of untruth in what we are told. Something that I know from my experience when I am dealing with not just governmental bureaucracies, but with business ones too, I am told no or I don't know, then I assume that there is a fifty fifty chance he is being lazy or out right lying. So I tend to just keep pressing and pressing.

S: Well sometimes you have a right to the information. For instance, supposing you go to the Post Office, and you want some information about the cost of a parcel to Tanzania or something like that. and they say "sorry I don't know" "Well you jolly well ought to know!" You are quite justified in saying that. "That is your job to know these things and to tell me, or to tell me which other clerk in the Post Office can give me the information." It is no use them shrugging their shoulders and saying they don't know, they are paid to know and to impart the information. So then one should be a bit uppity. So it is not a question of pressure but demanding that they do their duty. Because you are in a weak position as a wretched member of the public; if you upset them too much, they all go on strike. I really think that in this country, don't know how it is in the States, but in this country, people take things like that lying down...

[295]

End of tape

S: well it would be so in this country, what happens is the Government props you up, you don't go out of business, the tax payer has to keep you going, especially in the case of these Nationalised Industries and Enterprises. Anyway, that is just a little pet of mine.

Bob: What would you do, let them go out of business?

S: I think I would. I think that things have gone too far. People are being paid not to work virtually in some cases. Anyway that is a big subject, which we won't go into now. Watchful of speech, well we have discussed that a bit haven't we, well restrained in mind. How do you restrain your mind, how do you restrain your thoughts? It is difficult enough to watch over your speech, well what about thoughts? To restrain your actual thoughts. How do you do

that?

Murray: By restraining the other five senses.

S: That helps doesn't it? because a lot of your thoughts pertain to impressions which you allow in. You allow them to pass the gates of the senses, as we saw a few days ago. So that means that you have to be really careful, you have to have a strong armed guard on the gateways of every sense, scrutinizing all the impressions that present themselves. But even then, does that include the mind, because at the mind door there may enter in, say, recollections of impressions from the past and they may sometimes give rise to very unskilful mental states. So you have to always be asking yourself, so to speak, 'well what am I thinking?', what is my mental state?'. I think I have pointed out in lectures in the past that if you suddenly ask someone what are thinking?", very often he doesn't know. He has to stop and think what he has been thinking. Sometimes even then he doesn't know, which means that just vague thoughts have just been idly drifting through the mind. It is not that you are thinking, but that you are subject to thoughts. Thinking should be an active process, whereas with most people, most of the time, it is a passive process. They just register mental impressions of various kinds. They don't engage in thinking as an active positive dynamic process. Some people don't know what thinking means really. They have just a vague woolly dreamy association of ideas and impressions and recollections. That is not really thinking it is not directed thinking.

Bob: That is quite a useful practice that ... you know often one gets in conversation with people and you are not always there and they are [296] not always there either and to, and if you broke those as much as I think you meant there ... I have had people do it to me, and you are thinking about the most ridiculous things at the moment that they ask you, that you would not have been aware of if they hadn't interrupted you .

S: Yes, right, it is sort of vaguely dream like, isn't it? Just like clouds meandering through the mind.

Bob : You mentioned just a few days ago, in passing, that ... A Walter Mitty complex, do you see any positive value in that sort of exercise

S: Well what does one understand by the Walter Mitty complex to begin with?

Bob: Well as I understand it, for Walter Mitty it was just an escape, if you like, but if one put oneself in fantastic situations with a very definite rather just floating around vaguely in a dreamy state, you are actually consciously your imagination and more of you could be in there

S: Well I would say then that would not be then a Walter Mitty complex, because one understands by the Walter Mitty complex, something essentially passive and self-indulgent and escapist. But if one was doing it consciously and deliberately for a certain purpose, to develop certain aspects of one's mind, that wouldn't be a case of the Walter Mitty complex. You could for instance say imagine yourself quite deliberately as being burned at the stake or torn to pieces by wild beasts just in order to lessen your sense of attachment to your ego. You could do that. That would not be an instance of a Walter Mitty complex if you did it in that way.

Bob: But in that one was imagining one was winning the British Open Golf are you not in a sense more mindful and more concentrated while you are doing that, than if you were floating along in a dream?

S: Well the fact that one was more alive in a fantasy than in real life perhaps needs a bit of looking at. Walter Mitty's fantasies were essentially compensatory. He was just a meek, miserable little man as far as I remember. He was an utterly insignificant little person though he just had to compensate by imagining himself performing all these heroic exploits. So instead of putting things into his life, instead of developing his life, he merely indulged in fantasies, so if one was to deliberately to fantasize so as to ultimately enhance one's [297] life and encourage oneself to do certain things in real life, that might be justifiable, but that would cease then to be a Walter Mitty complex in the strict sense. If you were to fantasize winning the Open Golf Championship in order to get yourself to practise harder actually to win it, that would be different. Walter Mitty never had a thought of actually taking up and actually doing anything to win such Championship. Though he tended to live, to have his real life entirely in the fantasy world; that was his essential weakness.

Clive: I think you have mentioned before that the difference between imagination and fantasy, the fact that the imagination being something ...the fantasy which is actually connected to what you are actually doing in some way, i.e. if you are actually a golfer, imagining that you win the Championship, but fantasy being something like Walter Mitty an alienated faculty.

S: Something that you escape into, not something that you relate back to life in order to help you achieve something. So if you have sort of fantasies of building gigantic centres, well that is fine, provided that it is all to enthuse you and to inspire you to actually start building those gigantic centres one fine day. Do any of you ever have fantasies of any kind?

Murray: Sometimes I have quite a lot of fantasies of giving talks on the Dharma and stuff like that.

S: Well that isn't the Walter Mitty complex

Bob: To millions of cheering ...(laughter)

Murray: No they are not usually cheering, but stunned and awed. (laughter)

Bob: I have found that a reasonably good guide to just how much of me is behind something, if I say things about building, if the degree to which I am behind what I am doing is reflected to a certain amount in idle fantasies that I have about it. I take it as a sign of encouragement if I get into fantasizing about things...

S: But then again, you sort of fantasize about what you are doing, and the fantasy feeds back into what you are doing and contributes additional energy towards that. Whereas in the case of the Walter Mitty fantasy, the fantasy just goes spiralling outwards and never reconnects with real life.

Clive: When you are actually building, you have fantasies about greater building?

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Bob: Well no, I would see it more in terms of the development of the business than the actual building, but it is definitely connected to what I am doing at the time.

Clive: Often my fantasies are a complete compensation for what I am doing . Like I think I must have got into the habit because I did so much work that I wasn't interested in it, and I got into the habit of fantasizing about something with no connection. But I find that a pattern is set up so that if ever I do pretty straight forward sort of work which doesn't involve at the time that much of myself, I tend to fantasize about something completely unconnected, which has a very alienating effect.

Bob: But I did that in my previous job before contacting the Friends, I did get into Walter Mitty type things, to a certain extent I think it was what saved me, because you get into and every so often you'd wake up and compare it to what you are actually doing, and then I reached a point where I thought well I am never going to actually realize anything fantastic unless I hack off to Greece and become a novelist, which is what I did.

Mike: But that is it, which has something to do with where you were at, that you actually went and did something rather than for the next forty years and you got older doing the similar fantasies day after day.

S: I think a comparatively healthy person can fantasize as a temporary expedient if they're in an unhealthy situation. I mean for instance if a healthy male is excluded from possibilities of sexual satisfaction he temporarily fantasizes, to retain his sanity even sometimes, but if he's basically healthy, when the situation changes, he at once transfers from fantasy to real life. Sometimes fantasy can be compensatory as a temporary measure in a, I won't say positive way, but at least in a not completely negative way.

Mike: I have got one example, when I was thirteen, I had to walk long distances to go to violin lessons, and I found it excruciatingly boring and I had this type of Walter Mitty type fantasy, and it was like a tremendous relief, because it was like I just shut myself off from walking there twice a week, there and back, thirty minutes each way, over a motor way, through a boring estate and back, and it became a sort of real curse later on, but it was very much just a response to boredom, boredom...

S: Well one can fantasize positively in the sense of mentally [299] preoccupying oneself with something more skilful than what you are actually occupied with, knowing clearly what you are doing. I mean if for instance you are walking down the road and you are reciting a mantra, in a way that falls into the same category. Provided it doesn't sort of forget things about crossing the road and things like that. But unfortunately people engaged in unskilful occupations fantasize also in an unskilful way. I mean you might have a really sort of unhealthy piece work sort of job in a factory and you fantasize about all the prizes at bingo that evening and also winning a big pools prize on the same day. Something of that kind.

Murray: I think that with Walter Mitty, it is like his fantasy is his refuge, in real terms his life is unsatisfactory, but when we realize that our lives are unsatisfactory we take refuge in the Dharma, he takes refuge in...

S: So again the conditioned takes refuge in the conditioned, rather than in anything unconditioned or anything that represents the Unconditioned. So most people's so called

thinking is a swirling around of associated ideas, dreams, fantasies, very few people think in a concentrated directed purposeful sort of way. Certainly not when they have no practical job to do, no practical problem to solve.

All right, then, thirdly, let him do no evil nothing unskilful . Well that is pretty obvious isn't it. I think it is well known what is unskilful Perhaps it isn't unnecessary to remind you that the ten precepts, the ten Upasaka precepts are distributed over body, speech and mind. And it is of course here that body, speech and mind that are spoken of. So there are four precepts for speech and three pertaining to the mind and three pertaining to the body or action. So let him purify these three ways of action and win the Path made known by the sages. If you purify the paths, so to speak, the ways of action of body speech and mind, then you have a chance of coming very close to the path, the path here probably means the transcendental path itself. So in a way the precepts cover all the prerequisites of the spiritual life. I think probably in Tuscany we'll go through those precepts and consider them in detail. they are gone into in one of the early Mitrata but I think not nearly exhaustively enough.

B : I don't feel for myself that this whole area is completely clear. For example in the brief conversation that we had the other day, when you mentioned the possibility of bribes in India for example, [300] it is reasonably well known or rather it is assumed that the possibility that Sukhavati might well have been built with one or two things that fell off a back of a lorry, there are all these sorts of areas, (laughter ) there are whole questions over unskilful acts that one could do for actually skilful ends if you like.

S: Well clearly there is quite a bit of discussion needed in so many areas, so it could be that we find ourselves in Tuscany spending a whole week thrashing a particular precept in all its implications, which has never been really done, but apropos bribery, there was a discussion about bribery, I forget where, but it must have been in relation to India, either someone involved in the work there, or someone just interested and asking me, and I said that there were clearly two kinds of bribery, one of which I considered unethical and the other not necessarily so. The first kind, the unethical kind is when you induce someone by monetary means, or by offering some other kind of material reward to favour you in a way that you are not entitled to. The other is the not necessarily unethical, and you might say it was neutral even, but you are entitled to a certain service, but you cannot actually get that service without offering an inducement. I think that is probably justifiable, that kind of bribery, and it is that kind of bribery that is usually rife in India, for instance you find in Government offices your file will be lying on somebody's desk, and you cannot get it moved to another desk unless you slip the peon a couple of rupees just to go to that chap's desk and carry it over to somebody else's desk. Now you are not harming anybody, you...

Bob: But there the person you are harming is the person that you jump ahead of in the queue, because that other person isn't prepared to pay.

S: No you jump ahead in the queue, you have to give the bribe to keep your place in the queue, otherwise you fall behind, because all the other people are giving their little offerings. If to gain an unfair advantage then that is unethical, but if it is only to maintain what is actually your due and what you ought to have been getting without that payment, then I would say it is not unethical. It might be neutral

Mark : You could say that people with more money will be able to keep their place better than

people without any extra money.

S: That is also true.

Mike: So it is really the difference between bribery to gain favouritism, extra favourable treatment than being held for ransom.

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S: Yes, that is right. If you pay up a ransom, if you are held to ransom, are you guilty of bribery, are you bribing the person to release.? No, the term isn't really appropriate. Yes, in these government offices you are held up for ransom. Usually of course, you mention the rich and the poor, these people are not fools, they won't expect from you more than you can actually afford. If you are a very well to do contractor, they will expect ten rupees, if they know that you are an ordinary poor farmer, OK a rupee will do.

Pete: It does bring in the question whether you should allow people to hold you to ransom

S: That is true, but also if one wants to tackle that system, well you have to be first of all strong enough to tackle it. But not to tackle it prematurely so prematurely in fact that you are just wiped off the face of the arena so to speak and are then not in a position to do anything to anybody or reform anything. So if someone say in Poona in an office slips someone a few rupees to push forward our papers from one desk to another, I am not going to consider that unethical. But if you bribe an official say to give you land which otherwise would have gone to somebody else, then that is definitely unethical.

Mike: Presumably you do get middle ground cases. I can well imagine that you some official who discovers that he is in a critical position and is going to exploit it, say about a piece of land that we want and someone else wants, and try and makes us bid against the other party. I can well imagine that it could get very complicated and you are not really sure what is going on, you don't see that that is happening .

S: Actually of course this isn't happening in the present case, because nobody else wants that land, so that question certainly doesn't arise. I don't know that any actual bribery of any kind has actually been indulged in, I certainly haven't heard, but I wouldn't be surprised if sooner or later in India, something of that sort is necessary, so I would say well, certainly don't indulge in any unethical bribery to obtain for yourself an unfair advantage, but if it is just a case of helping on your papers, making sure you do get what you are entitled to, that is another matter. for instance sometimes you are expected when you receive say a money order, in India they have this system of money orders which are paid to you in cash by the postman, it is quite a useful way of transferring money, but you are expected to give [302] the postman something, when you have received a hundred rupees he knows that you have got money, because he has just paid you, you are expected to give him something, a tip. It is not that he won't give you the money, unless you promise, but you can see it coming very close to that. So if you give a tip after receiving satisfaction, or before receiving satisfaction, they might say what is the difference. You are getting the service to which you are entitled, and you are happy so you give him a tip, but sometimes you give him the tip before hand to make sure that you do get the service to which you are entitled.

Bob: In England there is a fairly common business practice for an employee of a largish



organization to require some personal, well you do that person some particular service, and they say stick it on the next bill, where does that come in?

S: Say it again, I'm not quite familiar with these transactions.

Bob: well suppose, lets postulate a hypothetical case, suppose I as an outside contractor going to Padmaloka Ltd, I am going to build your barns and you just work for Padmaloka, and actually you have seen a cassette recorder that you particularly want, that costs \$25 or maybe even you live outside of Padmaloka and you want a little bit of work done on your garden shed, and it comes to a \$100, and you when you send the bill in for say look, when the bill for the, barns to Padmaloka Ltd, stick a \$100 on it, so the company Padmaloka Ltd has paid for your garden shed to be done. It doesn't know about it.

S: On the face of it, I would ... without going into detail, I would say that that was theft, that is more than bribery, that is theft, I would say.

Mike: I think it is treated like that in law too.

S: And therefore clearly unethical.

Pete: Who is doing the thieving?

S: You are doing the thieving, because instead of paying for the job yourself, you are indirectly through that contractor getting your employers to pay for it, without their knowledge, so it is theft and lying too.

Bob: there is no skilful means in it then?

S: No, not at all, it is purely selfish and...

Bob: What about the contractor? I am asking about the contractor's [303] position, not your position. Where does that ethically put the contractor?

S: well with regards to granting of contracts, well there are several possibilities: you ... it would be unethical for you to do anything to gain a contract which gave you an unfair advantage. Supposing there was a competitor, and he was not offering say the servant of Padmaloka that advantage, and you were, so therefore you got the contract and he didn't, then you would be using bribery to obtain an unfair advantage, and that would be unethical. So in that case you would have to say to the servant of Padmaloka, "well sorry I cannot do that". You would have to say that that would be unethical. Your business would suffer probably.

Bob: Even though your motivation would be not so much greed hatred and delusion as a desire to serve.

S: well just to stay in business, but you have to consider especially in that particular line of business, well whether you could stay in it ethically at all. If you found that that line of business was necessarily unethical, under present social circumstances, well you should consider not being in that line of business at all. If you cannot do any business without being unethical.

Mike: What happens then though, at the same time line of business is the financial rock of the LBC, let's say? And if you go out of that business

S: I think I personally would find a way around all this if I put my mind to it. I mean I would get what I wanted done, but not be unethical I think one can if one is sufficiently ingenious. I'd sort of double cross that servant of Padmaloka in some way or other, so that he ended up actually paying for his own repairs, I'd work out something.

Clive: End up paying Padmaloka (laughter)

Bob: But "double-cross" doesn't sound like a very ethical way of doing things !

S: No, I think that double crossing is justified if it results in real justice being done in the end. If unethical people want to tangle with me, all right let them do so at their own peril.

Bob: I'm afraid I still operate from a sliding scale (laughter)

S: Little white lies, and little grey lies and light grey lies and [304] dark grey lies (laughter).

Bob: ...but within this, if the servant of Padmaloka wanted something ridiculous, then I would consider that unethical to stick that on Padmaloka's bill, but if he just wanted...

S: I would say if pushed, I might do the work for him, but not actually put it on the Padmaloka bill. Assuming that I didn't gain an unfair advantage in that way, if it was only preventing him from obstructing something that I was fully entitled to, I would say, yes I will do the job for him, but not put it on the Padmaloka bill, not actually inflate the Padmaloka bill.

Pete: Your estimate of the bill would go up.

S: Or I might even say, "look, I don't really like to put it on the Padmaloka bill, but I am quite happy to do it for you, just out of friendship", I know that puts him on the spot a little bit, doesn't it? I think there are always around, if one really tries. If one really wants to be ethical, I think that one can. There are these little grey areas, where there is a bit of room for give and take, but one shouldn't expand these grey areas too much, otherwise the whole business becomes very definitely a grey area. I know that a lot of things go on that are only marginally ethical, which are barely legal even. I mean people in official positions have to be careful, if a contract say is before a government committee, you shouldn't really take any member of that committee out to dine, before the contract is decided. You see what I mean? And members of committees in that position that are at all sensitive just will not accept invitations, because even a dinner can be construed as a bribe. Of course it is ridiculous if you take a wealthy person out to dinner, you are not literally bribing them, it is not that they couldn't get a dinner somewhere else, but it is a sort of sweetener; which really you ought not to perhaps to try to give.

Pete: It gets a bit difficult when you stop just being just friendly with the person, its like friendship requires...

S: Supposing you know them any way and would have invited them for dinner anyway, well

amongst sensible people of that sort at that level they understand what is going on, but sometimes it is very difficult to say whether there is a sort of bribery or not. Supposing you know all one another, you are all on friendly social terms and you are accustomed to dine at one another's houses, well what do you do then, [305] it isn't easy. But in public life you have to be very careful and not make mistakes. No one is going to question a dinner, that a prospective contractor has given you but if it is for instance a gold plated silver tea service, well that is a bit different.

Clive: take over. (laughter)

S: Or a drink at a pub, well no one would regard that as a bribe, but all right a crate of rare wines, that might be considered a bribe, so if you are sensible, OK., you accept a drink from someone who is tending a contract before your committee, but you wouldn't accept a crate of costly wines.

Mike: I think actually seeing what it is, is quite relevant. You used the term sweetener, it is not a bribe, and it is not stealing, it is nothing like this, it simply refusing to call things what they actually are.

S: But sometimes it is just a sweetener. You cannot really call it a bribe. You are just making the other person a bit happy with a small present, maybe the financial value of that present is ridiculous, is very very small, it is not that he needs it, but you are just indicating a bit of friendliness towards him, so it isn't strictly speaking a bribe.

Mike: But when someone calls ten thousand pounds cash to a small time council official a sweetener, you wonder what the main course is like. (laughter)

S: You start wondering about the misuse of the English language. (laughter)

Clive: there is also the taking advantage... I mean most of us are stretched for money, the taking advantage of little possibilities of saving a bit here and there, which seems to be under the counter. Say for instance when I took Bhante's car for a service, the windscreen washer unit was burnt out, and would have cost nearly \$21 for a new one, but the mechanic came into the reception room and said, "I have got a spare one which I got out of another car, it is second hand, but you can have it for a couple of quid" So it was a chance of whether it would actually work or not, but it seemed like a good opportunity of saving a bit of money and it has worked, so...

S: I don't know anything about this until afterwards (laughter)

Clive: So little things like this all the time. I mean do you take advantage of that, because strictly speaking it is not on.

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S: In what way is it not on?

Clive: Well especially in a garage like that, it is actually against the law, it is under the counter.

S: It is actually against the law?

Clive: I think so, for the mechanic...

Bob: Did you pay cash?

Clive: Yes.

Bob: I mean that brings in the other area that I wanted to mention that of rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's, what about that?

S: Paying up your taxes?

Bob: Yes and cash jobs are an obvious area. If I do a job for you, if you pay me thirty pounds cash, you don't have to pay VAT on it, but I also don't have to pay tax on it, if I make a profit at the end of the year. It doesn't ever have to go through my books.

S: If you say it is cash, it doesn't go through the till so to speak because it can do if it is cash, you can put it through the till. you are co-operating in defrauding the Inland Revenue.

Bob: Yes, but that is illegal as distinct being necessarily unethical.

S: I would say that what is illegal is not necessarily unethical, and what is legal is not necessarily ethical. But I do think that we tread on dangerous ground here because people can rationalize, well, they don't want to obey the law, so they rationalize and say it is not an ethical law anyway. And also there is the whole question of the need in a society to support the law as it were in principle even if the law is unjust in a particular instance. You see what I mean? I think probably a law would have to be really basically unjust and affect a very important area of human life for one to want to flout it. But then again if in a society there are so many laws and they are so complex, and people cannot help breaking them, well the law as such comes into disrepute. In fact, it has been said, I was reading an article recently, that there are now so many laws in Britain, which the average citizen doesn't know about, it is pretty certain that the average citizen breaks at least seven or eight laws every day without knowing it, so potentially or even actually every citizen is a criminal. So if the legislative body modifies laws to that extent, indirectly it contributes to the disrepute of law. So you get a situation where the citizen almost decides for himself which law he is going to obey [307] and which he is not. In a sense you can say well you have consented to those laws because those laws have been enacted by the Parliament, and the Government introducing those laws was voted into power by you. You could say I voted under an unjust system, I voted under the system of first past the post, I personally believe in proportional representation, and if proportional representation had been the rule, then that particular law would not have been passed. So there is quite a balance whether one attaches more importance to the maintenance of law and order or whether one attaches more importance to the freedom of the individual to decide for himself what he will do and what he will not do.

Andy: So when you uphold a law on principle, you are doing it because by breaking the law you will ever so slightly de-stabilise the rule of law and order, and thereby cause suffering to people.?

S: Yes. Thereby, you might have to abide by a law which in the case of that individual, you regard as unjust, but you refrain from breaking it because you don't want to imperil the reign of law in society. You may feel it is sufficiently in peril already and you don't want to contribute to that. That is a rational point of view. Though not every body would agree with that.

B : To a certain extent we are trying to undermine that system anyway, because...

S: Ah, but one is not trying to simply to undermine, one is trying to replace, one undermines in order to replace. One does not merely to undermine, and there might be a case for undermining if you or we in the FWBO were in a position to take over immediately afterwards. But it would be irresponsible to undermine when you really have nothing to put in its place. I mean not everybody would agree with that point of view. Some people say undermine it, have a revolution and something will happen, something will come out of that. Well history shows that the only thing that immediately comes after revolutions is dictatorships, one doesn't want that, that would probably even worse, almost certainly even worse.

Pete: It seems that it could quite easily suit us to have the situation as stable as possible.

S: Er, yes. Well certainly the international situation. If the international situation remains stable, well, you could even say well just give us enough time, and the FWBO will win. So stability is definitely [308] to our advantage, rather than instability and probably national stability too. I mean does it really help the FWBO to have riots all over the place, race riots, and police shootings, does that really help us to convince people about the need for the new society in our sense? Would it really help,? I really doubt that.

Murray: I would have thought that it would help. Because people would be more dissatisfied with the status quo.

S: But when people get dissatisfied in that sort of way, all sorts of passions are let loose, all sorts of unskilful mental states and attitudes and behaviour and they are then not in a fit state to even listen to the voice of reason or to think in terms of the individual, the mob takes over very often.

Bob: But it does shake people out of their complacency.

S: It shakes for instance, lets say the property classes out of their complacency, but to what extent? that they make a few concessions. Which they withdraw as soon as they get the opportunity. It doesn't shake... I don't think that sort of upheaval shakes people out of their complacency in an existential sort of way, in the way that we would want, I doubt that very much. I think that it makes them rather desperate.

Cieron: I don't imagine for example, Northern Ireland would be a good place for the Friends, because there are plenty of people there who know that world is quite a heavy place, but...

Mike: But the question of stability can be taken at quite a few different levels, like you can have really violence in stability, and then there is social and economic stability and political stability and obviously they are interlinked, but one thinks of a period such as Britain or even

more so, North America, at least White North America in the nineteen fifties, I cannot think of any era, culture type less suitable for the Friends other than the extremely violent, everything was designed to reinforce complacency, and stagnation. It is as if we don't want political violence and the concurrent physical suffering attached to it, but somehow maybe something more like the sixties where things were stirred up in that sense.

S: I am not saying that things should be not be stirred up, but I don't think that stirring things up to the extent that there was a break down of law and order, mass or mob violence, I don't think that would help us at all, but by all means shake things up a bit, yes, but even then one must be careful. Because even a mild shaking up of things can [309] result in outbreaks of violence, police shootings and all the rest of it and then you are morally responsible. This is what Mahatma Gandhi found in India . He called out these non-violent demonstrations, peaceful passive non co-operation, but some of them ended up very very violently indeed. And he felt personally responsible, It is very difficult to keep large numbers of people under control and acting in a responsible way. The larger the number of people, involved, the greater the chance for an outburst of violence. Mob hysteria takes over. Complete unreason takes over.

Bob: All the same, I have been struck by what has been happening in Switzerland and Germany, where young people have ... there has been systematic rioting, and just generally expressing frustration, has caused as a nation, for them ... they have got everything that they think that they want, and why are kids rioting when they have got everything that they want.?

S: Middle class families comfortably off. -?- rampage.

Bob: And surely that is positive?

S: Well this is something that we could reflect upon and utilize, but not I think a situation that we could actually encourage, because we don't know how far it would go. I don't know if there have been any actual police shootings, have there? Have people been killed. It could very easily have happened.

Mike: It has been close to it around some of the Nuclear Power stations in Germany.

S: I don't rule out the possibility that one day the FWBO when it is big enough will stage peaceful demonstrations on particular topics. But one needs to know what one is doing. All right one has to be ... Mahatma Gandhi was very aware of these sort of things ... all right supposing you have a peaceful FWBO demonstration. All right, first of all you might be quite confident that you can get your say ten thousand FWBO members to march from Bethnal Green to Trafalgar Square. All right you have got the people. All right you are quite confident that they will march completely peacefully, all right you have got the police permission and all that, but can you be absolutely sure that you are not going to be attacked on route by some hostile group. [310] Not only that, can you be sure that not only will you not be attacked by some hostile group, but that some even of your own people under that provocation, will not fight back? And can you guarantee that some other party again will not join in the fray and make it even worse.? Can you guarantee that the police will then not have to become involved, even open fire, even have some of your own people killed, can you guarantee that? You see what I mean? You have to be very sure what you are doing. So I am not ruling out that one day the FWBO or one of our arms or branches might not stage something of that sort,

for some particular reason. But we would have to be very very careful, very sure of what we were doing. It wouldn't be a case of allowing a few young FWBO hot heads to have...

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End of tape fifteen side B...

S: Well I doubt that anyway. I am not sure.

Murray: From experience it seems to me that a demonstration is tolerated by the Government so long as it is fairly harmless, so long as it is not having too much effect. As soon as it is having too much effect, they can even plant agitators within your ranks just to discredit you...

S: That would be difficult with us, because we know everyone individually. But no doubt that is a tactic with some governments that they resort to.

Murray: It is much better to work behind the scenes on a more subtle level. They probably don't even recognize your work line because they don't have that background, that extra vision.

Bob: I wasn't thinking in terms of us either launching agitation or supporting it in that way, I do find just the reaction when I read about them in the news-papers is positive, I think "Oh good, the kids have been rioting again, rather than tst, tst, tst, what is the world coming to"

S: But then one doesn't feel quite so sure about it if for instance you were to read that they, half a dozen of them, had been shot dead by the police, you couldn't be so happy about that.

Mike: I think that problem is ... I went on my first demonstration last autumn, the big Anti-Nuclear March, and bumped into some people I knew. I felt quite strongly that I should be there, just in the sense and I did feel afterwards that it did have some sort of effect at least making government and media aware that there were a lot of people who were quite disturbed by the sort of nuclear build up that has happened, but at the same time there was no doubt that the atmosphere around Trafalgar Square was thoroughly sick, was the only word I could give for it. And probably a meeting of the National Front would have been sicker - without a doubt, but the speakers, the good and sincere speakers they were so obviously, if the healthiest speakers were the Christians, you can imagine what the rest were like...

S: Well I saw in India that usually in the sphere of politics you could only appeal to the masses and get things going on a mass level by appealing to negative emotions. And I saw myself, again and again, in meetings that I attended that the politicians that had been thrown up from the ranks of the Ex-untouchables used to do just this. And I would always try to introduce a positive note and get the meeting into a positive mood, they would always try to do the opposite, and there was always a tussle between us. And I ended up usually trying to have the last word, having my speech the last. In India, the most important speaker is usually kept to the last. [312] And sending everybody home in a positive mood, but they used to try to send them home in a mood of bitter hatred against the Brahmins and ready to tear down the Brahmins houses and attack them. This is the sort of mood that they wanted to send them home in. Anyway ... coffee-time.

S: All right let's continue, so we have more or less dealt with this verse. You notice the word

for Sage is Issi, which is derived from rishi, a very general Indian, term for wise men, for sages; you notice the vocabulary of the Buddha is quite unspecialized. It isn't until later that there is the technical Buddhist Vocabulary. The Buddha sometimes calls himself the Maharishi, the great rishi, the great Sage. Usually we don't use that term, nowadays in connection with Buddhism, it is more specifically a Hindu term. But the Buddha did use that term quite freely, just as he used the term muni, which was a pre-Buddhistic term. So we mustn't forget that our sort of Buddhist vocabulary has been standardized to a great extent. We just speak of the Buddha, but the Buddha spoke of the Jina, of the Tathagata, the Mahamuni, he spoke of himself metaphorically as the Man-bull, the Man-Horse and so on. In one particular text the Buddha is called the Yakka, a sort of spirit, a Sublime spirit almost a ghost. the demon, or the diamond. So the path made known by the Sages.

All right, next verse: "Verse 282.

"From concentration springs Wisdom; it wanes from lack of concentration. Knowing these two paths of increase and decrease of Wisdom let him so conduct himself that wisdom may increase." *Yoga ve jayati bhuri, ayoga bhurisankhayo; etap dvedhapanthan natva bhavaya vibhavaya ca tath'attanan nivesevya yatha bhuri pavaddhati.*

S: There is a bit of possible confusion here: because Buddhadasa translates earlier on the word panna as wisdom and here he is translating the word bhuri as wisdom. But bhuri cannot really be wisdom in the technical sense. Not in the sense of bhavanamayiprajna, why not?

Murray: Because it can wane from lack of concentration, but bhavanamayiprajna doesn't wane,...

S: Yes, once you have achieved it it is there, so to speak. Even though the concentration may wane, you are left so to speak with that residue of wisdom and insight. So here it is more understanding in the more ordinary sense so yes, even an ordinary understanding say, the sutamayiprajna or the cittamayiprajna, these certainly wax and wane according to your degree of concentration and integration and mental energy.

Mike: Is the for concentration yoga?

S: The word for concentration is yoga, but in the sense of mental yoga, [313] therefore roughly concentration, dhyanic experience. So if one wants to really understand something, one has to concentrate, one has to bring together the forces of the psyche, one has to direct one's energy. One has to think in a directed sort of way, not in the way that we usually do, just "think" . Mental energy has to be directed, has to be purposeful.

Murray: This brings in the spiral path ... I was wondering if you can have elements like up to say concentration which is just before knowledge or wisdom, if you can have elements of the different stages all at the same time. Without say going suffering faith, joy, rapture, and so on and experience each one fully, then move up to the next one. May be you are on the level of joy, but have fragments of concentration bordering on insight and rapture, ecstasy and so on.

S: I am not quite sure what you are asking ... You can have an irregular experience of the Path, that I made clear the other day, but you seem to be asking something a bit different from that.



Murray: Like in terms of the ascension of the path whether you have to fully establish that yourself in joy as it were, and in dependence on that fully developed, rapture arises and then so on and so forth up to concentration, Is it possible to be generally around the level of joy in terms of overall sense of your day to day life, but in fact you can quite well develop concentration and that is enough momentum to break through into knowledge.

S: Well yes, you are simply asking whether one can follow a path of irregular steps, this is what it really amounts to. What I have said in the past, what the standard Buddhist teaching is or was, is that you cannot perfect a successive stage, without having perfected the previous stage, but you can certainly have some experience of the succeeding stage without having perfected the preceding stage. That is the general principle. So you can have some experience of say stage seven without having perfected stage four at all, but you cannot perfect stage seven until stages six, five four, three, two and one have been perfected. And if you have say an experience of a higher stage before perfecting your experience of a lower stage, your experience of that higher stage will be very unsteady and not long lasting, very short lived, uncertain.

Murray: So I take it here that perfection is synonymous with integration of particular aspects of yourself.

S: Sooner or later you have to follow the path of regular steps, sooner or later the path of irregular steps has to merge into the path of regular [314] steps, otherwise you just cannot get any further. So when you cannot get any further, you just have to go back to the earlier stages and consolidate those, so that you can go further on the higher level But you may start off with some experience of those higher levels even with a very shaky experience of the lower levels, far from having consolidated them.

Mike: This does seem to link up with all the types that have been discussed in all the talks this week. And it seems if I have understood it correctly or at least the impression that I have got is that in a sense we should be simultaneously following the path of regular steps and that of irregular steps. If we decide "oh now I cannot worry about this, it is too high for me, I must concentrate on that down below," it'll probably be guaranteed of wasting...

S: Yes, well actually you cannot do that, because as I have pointed out in modern times, we know that intellectually far more than is good for us. So now even if we were to think that the Sunyata teaching is far beyond us and we shouldn't have anything to do with it, but we have actually read about it, so what are we to do, so in a sense we have had in a sense some glimpse of that higher stage, even though it is totally irrelevant to us at present, by the very fact that there is so much information is available for which we are not ready, and were exposed to that, we are forced to follow the path of irregular steps, whether we like it or not, to begin with, at least to a degree. As soon as we realize that, then we start sort of consolidating and following the path of regular steps without actually leaving the path of irregular steps which in fact we cannot do. because all sorts of books have been published on Buddhism and we hear all sorts of things, whereas in the old days, you'd only get directly from your teacher just a few teachings that you actually needed now. And you practice them for ten or fifteen years, and then you'd come back for more and perhaps you'd be given a little aide memoir in writing, just a page or two you'd just take that away and really treasure it and know it by heart,,thoroughly. But now we read all sorts of things that we are not ready for. We know about them, but that is about all. We are sort of landed on a path of irregular steps

willy-nilly, we have no choice, unless occasionally happens, we are some innocent naive person, who has received no education, doesn't come from a cultured background, left school early, took up a very ordinary job, and just gets into meditation, hears about Buddhism but actually hasn't read anything, doesn't particularly fancy reading anything, well yes he could follow the path of regular steps. But he is a very rare bird indeed. There are one or two of them about. But then you need, well you always need, but that sort of person especially needs a good teacher with whom he is in personal contact, and who feeds him whatever he needs [315] from time to time. I mean there are stories in the Upanishads which indicate the old attitude which in a way Buddhism inherited to some extent; the pupil goes to the teacher, and he says "Master what is the essence of, [ I am just making this up, it goes something like this ] what is the essence of seed?" the teacher says "Water", and he goes away and meditates on that ten years. Then at the end of ten years, he comes back, "What is the essence of water?", "Fire", and he goes away and meditates on that for ten years and then he comes back and asks "What is the essence of fire?" "Heat" and he goes away and meditates on that for another ten years, and that was much more the attitude. You can imagine nowadays what a long discussion there would be on it and how many books would have to be consulted. But that is a bit of an extreme example, but it represents the overall attitude fairly well.

So the bhikkhus, the Buddha's own disciples, they didn't have a whole library of the Buddha's teachings, they didn't have even transcriptions of his seminars to read, now, they had to remember it all, or get hold of someone who did remember. The Buddha made things a bit easy for them, by repeating the same talk several times and reducing it to various headings so to speak and summarizing it in little formulas or strings of terms or telling stories, or making up little chants, or sometimes they themselves would make up chants and put the teachings into verses, and made up little poems that they could chant to themselves and chant to other people so that other people could learn them. But that is all that you had to reflect on, meditate on and practice. It was only much later, centuries later that you had written books and texts, to actually read and consult. So we mustn't forget that. I mean in the Buddha's day, there may be all that you know of the Buddha's teaching might have been ten or twelve verses of the, what is now the Dhammapada, that was the Dhamma for you and you just took it very very seriously, recited those verses to yourself every day, and reflected on them and examined yourself to see whether you were really putting them into practice and that would be enough. That would be your life.

Murray: I felt that a bit with that Mitrata Omnibus; maybe the title should have been called "Everything you wanted to know about Buddhism," that and the Dhammapada.

S: But even the Mitrata Omnibus doesn't contain everything that you need to know about. It doesn't contain everything that you want to know, perhaps it does contain everything that you need to know, at least for quite a few years. So you could imagine someone just taking a copy of the Mitrata Omnibus, and just going off somewhere and living off that for several years, studying it and trying to understand it, practising it. That is enough, if you are not mentally overactive.

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Murray, Do you think that if you are mentally very active or tend towards overactive that study could be quite a good counter-active tendency?

S: Well if you have a faculty you need to exercise it, you cannot deny it, you just have to be

careful it doesn't take a neurotic turn. You must direct your study and be purposeful and really try to understand what you read, not just read for the sake of keeping yourself mentally occupied.

Mike It does seem to me that actually threw the whole question of the value of study. I have heard it said that you have said that most people most mitras, not to speak of Order Members, easily know more than enough about the Dharma to be getting on with, to reach the level of Stream Entry or something like that.

S: Well perhaps I should qualify that, that they know quite a lot but that they don't know it really clearly and definitely enough. For instance they know about the Three Refuges, they could give a sort of halting incoherent account of the Three Refuges, probably almost everybody, but they don't really know them inside out, they haven't really thought about them or reflected on them or meditated on them, so they are lacking in that respect, but they have the raw material as it were. They haven't really heard properly yet. The wisdom that arises from hearing hasn't really arisen yet, they haven't really heard, they haven't really taken in, and they haven't of course really reflected, in most cases. I mean how many people sit and ask themselves what does the word Buddha really mean, what do I understand by Buddha. How many people turn that in their minds for example, not many.

Murray: There is the aspect of aesthetics, that side of study. Like that one could actually in fact study the Dharma as one would read Shakespeare or one goes surfing at the beach, just because it is intrinsically enjoyable.

S: Well yes that is true too. But you know the Dharma does exist in different forms. Some people find the Abhidharma for instance enjoyable. One verse by an Abhidharma scholar speaks of the Abhidharma as a feast of delight, well it is for some people, for some people the Abhidharma is an absolute feast of delight, but for some it is absolutely boring, it sends them straight to sleep. For others the White Lotus Sutra is really enjoyable, they love it, for others it is rather tedious, all these lengthy descriptions and really bizarre happenings, they just cannot get on with it at all. Some people find the Pali scriptures rather dull and dry and they find the Mahayana sutras fascinating. [317] So a lot depends on your individual approach and temperament. But I was going to say that Bacon, Francis Bacon, in one of his essays says, I think that it is his essay on Studies, that reading maketh a full man, Discourse, by which he means conversation, maketh a ready man, by which he means a quick-witted man and writing maketh an exact man, by which he means a precise man, so a lot of people need more writing, so we will be having in Tuscany speakers classes and people giving talks. I think that few things help one in cultivating precision of thought and expression as much as writing and giving talks. Because sometimes you think that something is clear in your own mind but actually it isn't. It is just a vague hazy impression, and when you come to communicate that to others then of course you are up against the fact that you have only got a vague hazy impression and then you have to start thinking because you have got to speak, you have got to communicate, that helps you sort out your own ideas, your own understanding becomes clearer, more precise, so this is why also it has been said, and I have sometimes said, that you only really start learning when you start teaching, because that is what provides you with the stimulus to really clarify, and really sort things out and when you communicate you probably remember things much better than when you are merely turning them over in your own mind, talking to yourself as it were. So talks and speakers classes, people preparing and giving talks is going to be a regular feature of the whole course, and by the end of the three months, each

one of you should be able to give a decent short talk on some basic aspect of the Dharma.

Clive: What do you call short?

S: Twenty minutes, at least that. Some will be surprised to find how they can go on more than that. I remember the case of Ratnaketu. Ratnaketu had never given a talk before in his life, he arrived in London with me a bit sort of travel drunk, if you know what I mean, suffering from a bit of jet-lag, and almost immediately, I think it was the very next evening, he was called upon to give a talk about his life and he spoke really brilliantly, without the slightest hesitation for two hours, and everyone was really fascinated, it was a really good interesting talk. He had never spoken before, but of course he was speaking about something that he knew, he knew about his own life, so it was a quite creative experience for him to be recounting that and putting it across to people. If you had asked him to expound say even the four Noble Truths, he would have been at a loss, he could probably do it now, just about, (laughter) but he could speak because he knew what he was talking about, he had a really good grasp of the subject. So I think everybody could speak, they just need to have some knowledge and be clear in their own mind what they are saying. [318] I don't think there is any real difficulty. You just need practice. I mean look at the galaxy of speakers we have got now in the Movement. Look at Subhuti, Nagabodhi, Chintamani, Devamitra, Abhaya, all really good speakers but only a few years ago, there was hardly one of them that could give even a decent short talk, not on the Dharma anyway. But they have all come up, some of them very rapidly. I mean Ratnavira has come on very rapidly, he has given remarkably good talks. Kamalasila...

Bob: Ratnaketu has given some very good talks

S: Ah, Unfortunately I have not heard any further talks of his. So we have got twelve, fourteen, sixteen quite adequate speakers within the movement, trained up almost from scratch and most of you have had the benefit of a lot of talks like that. I really expect that in Italy, well I don't expect too much, but I expect say that in three years time you'll probably be able to give talks of that kind or that calibre. I'd be surprised if most of you cannot.

Murray It was very noticeable in the United States when I was visiting other Buddhist groups...

End of side A

S: Some of our friends were quite disappointed hearing Trungpa talk. I must say I was surprised myself to hear this, but they said that he just sort of rambled on and they were really disappointed. He knows his Tibetan Buddhism, but he doesn't seem to have been able to put it over in that sort of way.

Murray: The Karmapa came to Boston and I think he had several thousand people listening to him, and he just really didn't have anything to say.

S: That is amazing. But it isn't amazing, because I have remember some of my own experiences in Kalimpong, I mean there was a whole herd of incarnate lamas there, and they didn't speak until I organized them, yes, they used to look to me for this, I had all the Gelugpa incarnate lamas and Nyingma incarnate lamas and the whole lot and I mean I took it upon

myself to organize to Tsongkhapa's death anniversary celebrations and organized a big procession and a big meeting and part of the whole show was a mass meeting of ... we had the platform crowded with these incarnate lamas, most of them perfectly useless, I used to have to make them give talks, I said here are all these Tibetan Buddhists in Kalimpong, I didn't understand much of Tibetan, but anyway I used to organize these sort of meetings especially like that, and I would have them all on the platform and I [319] would make them give a lecture and here were eminent incarnate lamas who would say "I cannot give a talk, I have never given a talk in my life" and L would say "Well you jolly well ought to have given a talk, you ought to be preaching the Dharma, you are supposed to be an incarnate lama", so I said, come on prepare a short talk; I'll show you how to do it and I used to make them do it. and I criticized their performance afterwards, it was almost like a speakers class, and one of them would write out his talk and read it in a very low whisper and this was their way of delivering their talk. And I would say that is no good at all, the only one who knew how to give a lecture and gave really good lectures, as it were instinctively was Dhardo Rimpoche, who has never apparently attended a speakers class or anything like that, but he knew how to do it, because he was in touch with the people and not only knew the Dharma, but he knew what was needed and the Tibetans used to love his talks, they were really very good, very clever talks and very humorous and meaningful, so they used to turn up if they knew that I had organized a lecture by Dhardo Rimpoche they would really turn up in their hundreds for that, but the other Rimpoches they didn't shine at all, in comparison with Dhardo Rimpoche and if I may say so, myself. We were usually the two stars of the show. Rimpoche speaking in Tibetan and me speaking in English and then we would have all the other ten or twelve talks, but they were really even quite prominent people, but they just didn't know how to do it, they had no sense of the audience, here were these people, let me tell some thing of the Dharma to them, no they didn't seem to have that gift. They did improve after a bit of coaching from me, I got them to speak out and to think about they were going to say. I mean the Dalai Lama didn't know. I was in Bombay when the Dalai Lama was there, after he took refuge in India and I persuaded him to visit some of the local viharas where ex-untouchables came, and I persuaded him to go and I said that they would really like to hear a talk from him, and he said what shall I talk about, I don't know what to talk about, so I said talk about the Bodhisattva ideal, so he did that with verses from the Bodhicaryavatara and it was a great success, but I was surprised that he didn't sort of have a sort of instinct and know what to say, but he seemed quite helpless. But anyway he has improved now and he does give talks and lectures, but I don't think that they are all that good even now.

Murray: Do you know the Dalai Lama very well?

S: I cannot say that I knew him very well, but I have met him on a number of occasions, and we talked about quite a lot of things.

Murray: I have wondered what he is up to, because like his meeting with the pope, and...

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S: Well I think well that is where he ... well he just doesn't understand the whole scene. So I used to sometimes think well you know maybe these Tibetan lamas, even though they are spiritually gifted and even enlightened some of them, well they just don't know the current situation and therefore cannot adapt to it, but then again another little voice used to say well what about compassion, if they have got Wisdom, haven't they got Compassion, wouldn't that put them in touch with the current scene v and then again I saw that Dhardo Rimpoche was

able to do this, he was completely alive to the current scene and the modern world, he never sacrificed an iota of his principles, but he was very much in touch with what was going on and knew how to adapt, very very skilfully, so sometimes Dhardo Rimpoche and myself talking together very privately, we sometimes joked a bit about the Dalai Lama, and I used to say to him the real pity is that you aren't the Dalai Lama, I think that you would have managed things very differently, and I am sure that he would have done, he would have much better than the actual Dalai Lama, he would have much better use of his opportunities.

Murray: It makes you wonder if they are enlightened, because there is the old Zen adage that the Zen master can use whatever means are at his disposal...

S: Well yes, some Buddhist teachers, going to the States have managed to put across quite a lot with the minimum of language, some of them have done that because they have got something to put across and they are in touch with the situation, even if they haven't got a very good command of the language, they manage. But there are others who cannot manage even if they know the language, so I tend to think on the whole that if you cannot ... I really doubt if someone can really know the Dharma in the true sense and not be able to put it across. I don't mean that they have to be a glib talker or a have a fine command of language or a poetical speaker, no, they may not be a good speaker in the technical sense, but they can certainly put things across. They may not be able to deliver a neatly tied up lecture beginning, middle and end, but they can put across to you what they want to put across quite effectively.

Mike: It as if you cannot speak at all then, but you are physically capable of speaking that there is some lack of integration

S: Yes, so I attach great importance to speech in this sort of way and I have the example of Dhardo Rimpoche before my eyes all the time, he always coped, he always managed, he always adapted, he was always very skilful, he was such a notable contrast to all the other Tibetan lamas, all the other incarnate lamas. So I don't say that I don't believe in [321] incarnate lamas, but I certainly don't think that all that are recognized as incarnate lamas are in fact so, I think that a very small number of them indeed, officially in Tibet there are more than two thousand. I don't think that there is even that number even in Tibet. Dhardo Rimpoche and I talked about this quite a lot, and he told me one day that he thought that there weren't more than seven or eight real incarnate Bodhisattvas in Tibet. Well I had incarnate lamas coming to me and breaking down and confessing that they weren't really incarnate lamas at all, but had just been installed as such and some of them became my pupils and used to come and study English with me and pour out their troubles to me, but they would still be highly regarded as incarnate lamas by Tibetans in Kalimpong, some were born into very prominent aristocratic families, they had been well educated but that real zest for the Dharma wasn't there.

Clive Do you think that the Dalai Lama is a genuine incarnate Lama?

S: I cannot really be sure of that. He is a very good man, I will say that, he is very genuine, very decent, very honest, he has certainly many spiritual qualities, but whether he is an incarnate Bodhisattva, I would not like to say. I don't personally have that definite faith that he is. Whereas I could believe that of Dhardo Rimpoche, just from what I have seen of him and his qualities.

Pete: Did you meet any others that you thought were?

S: Oh that is very difficult to say. I certainly met many, quite a few with whom I was very much impressed, but to say that someone is an incarnate Bodhisattva, that is to say that they have consciously come in to this life just out of compassion to help people that is a very big claim indeed. I heard a wonderful remark by Christmas Humphreys who did sometimes hit the nail on the head, we were talking about incarnate lamas years ago and he said, "What is all this talk about incarnate lamas, what is an incarnate lama after all? It is only the equivalent of the local vicar reborn" and that is true. because you are not necessarily an incarnate Bodhisattva just because you are identified as the reincarnation of an abbot that has died, because that abbot may not have been a Bodhisattva to begin with. I mean every-body is an incarnation of somebody or other according to Buddhism. But the emphasis is a reincarnate Bodhisattva, this is what the Tulku is supposed to be, at least. I mean I have met dozens of them, I was introduced to the ... oh this is the reincarnation of Tilopa, this is the reincarnation of Milarepa, this is the reincarnation of Nagarjuna, there are thousands of them, but you try to have (laughter) and you find that he is stupid so can you really believe that that person is a reincarnation of Nagarjuna. At the [322] beginning you are not quite sure, of these things, well you think, maybe so and so has lost his intelligence, passing over from one life to another, maybe it is still the incarnation, but then you think Nagarjuna was famed for his intelligence for his intelligence and wisdom, is it really Nagarjuna. I remember a well-intentioned English Buddhist lady out there, she took little Tilopa under her wing, reincarnation of Tilopa, and she said I am not at all happy about little Tilopa he keeps wetting the bed, and he has got worms, So are you really dealing with Tilopa the teacher of Naropa. Are you? You see what I mean?

Murray You would expect him to be even more developed than what he was

S: So I ended up being quite sceptical, not about the principle of re-incarnate bodhisattva hood but about whether the majority of these people really were that.

Murray: Well mathematically speaking you have only got to get one say supposed incarnate lama identified by another incarnate lama wrongly and in his turn he identifies three or four others wrongly and the rot sets in.

S: Yes and when you get for instance Trungpa's son identified by a lama as a reincarnate lama, what are you to think of all that. It begins to look like a bit of a racket, you see what I mean.

Mike: They are still doing it outside of Tibet?

S: Oh yes. There is quite bit of it going on. Some of these lamas have been dead twenty twenty-five years and they are re-emerging, and I am very sceptical, but I am not sceptical about the principle.

Mike: Lama Govinda writes about Tomo Geshe Rimpoche with ..as a boy, he saw the reincarnation and he felt this instant bond in that case,...

S: I must say I was very impressed by the present Tomo Geshe Rimpoche, and I knew him quite well, he was coming to me every two or three days in Kalimpong for a long time after

he had arrived safely from Tibet. And he was studying English with me, and we became quite good friends and there was something quite unusual and even uncanny about him. He was a little tiny chap, he was even smaller than Ratnaketu, he is about 4 and half feet or something like that, but very sweet, very nice, but you always got the impression of him as a really old man, you never thought of him as young, he was about twenty two or three then, he just moved about and spoke and reacted just like an old man. I remember him especially because of all my Tibetan friends, there were only two who ventured to pull my leg sometimes, one of them was Tomo Geshe Rimpoche and he had a very distinctive sort of way of doing it, he would seem to be quite serious, and he would be talking about this and that, and then you [323] would see a little twinkle in his eye, and you would realize he was very very gently pulling your leg and he would love to do this. And there was another Tibetan friend I had who would do it likewise, who was the brother of two Rimpoches, so they each had this very delicate sense of humour and also it was a sign of friendliness. Tibetans weren't very often friendly in that sort of way, they were usually very formal, friendly but formal. So I could have believed about Tomo Geshe that yes he was a genuine reincarnation, but I cannot say that I am absolutely convinced about that, I have an open mind about it. But about many of the others, I am quite certain that they couldn't possibly ... and also there is a great claim in made in the West about someone is the tenth incarnation of Rimpoche this and the fourteenth incarnation of that, so one of the things I have been saying is well what is impressive about that, the Pope is the three hundredth and something Pope, and all these English bishops they are all hundredth and something bishop, the hundred and third bishop of London, the hundred and something Archbishop of Canterbury, well if it is, if you are thinking in terms of lineage well the Christian Church has got plenty of lineage, much more than the Tibetan Buddhists, so we shouldn't just be over-impressed by these things, But you can just imagine the Bishop of London, say, going to say China and preaching to the Chinese Christians and saying ... and the advance publicity saying The Hundred and Second Bishop of London is it, last successor ... that whole long, long distinguished line it sounds very impressive, but the point is what is the man like himself, that is the point. So in the same way with the fourteenth reincarnation of Rimpoche so and so, well what is this man like? You are not just to think that he must be great because he is the fourteenth this or that. You are being deluded. You should see from your own personal contact what he is really like.

Mike: In a sense that the belief in the total reincarnation of all these qualities, sublimely goes against the teaching of the Kalama Sutta.

S: Oh yes. The Kalama Sutta doesn't encourage any sort of starry-eyed attitude towards all these exotic personalities. It is really pitiable to see people in the West adopting these sort of attitudes and even say Tibetan teachers some of them encouraging these sort of attitudes, apparently. It has got very little to do with Buddhism, very little to do the Dharma.

Murray: It is almost ... the worship of Jehovah just dressed up in different clothes.

S: Well it is worse in a way, because you can actually see the man before you and you just ignore it and close your eyes to all these, well the [234] things that you really do see. You try to explain them away.

Mike People do that with Iyengar, in the Yoga circles. This yoga day I was on recently, some people had the effrontery to say that he explained things incredibly clearly, which starry-eyes apart, as Mark can point out, he doesn't exactly.



S: Which doesn't mean that he isn't a good Yoga teacher, I mean every body agrees that he is first class when it comes to the practice of Yoga and he can demonstrate, but to explain that is another gift all together. So if you are attributing to people qualities that they don't possess, then I think as I said in one of my aphorisms, that is no compliment to them, one should not feel flattered at having attributed to oneself qualities that one knows that one doesn't possess.

Mike: Just going back to this theme of Study and talking, Vajradaka, when he came back from his world tour said that the Buddhist group in the States that had impressed him most was the Korean-Zen group, a group started up Korean Zen people in Boston, the one that Jory is now associated with, and he told me that one of the things that had impressed him, is that there were two fairly young pupils in their early twenties who had been involved four or five years I think, and he pressed them after a talk on some, I don't remember what point it was, to do with the Mahayana, quite detailed and they came back with quite clear answers, they quite obviously understood it, and it obviously impressed him, but it made me think that in many ways that a lot of the clarification of an exposition of the Dharma is very relevant if you are going to teach, but at the same time it is, as if the core of the teaching has to be from your own experience, presumably to a large extent meditation, living in communities, just the experience of communication and that threw it back on to my self, because my whole background is hyper academic, a sort of whole lineage of academic family in fact, and I have sort of realized over the years that as I was trying to get into alternative growth that the more reading that I did, it was like the more I bolstered my defences against change, so I reacted against anything like that when I first got involved in the Friends, I didn't read anything about Buddhism, I could not be sold a Newsletter...

S: And now you are selling them.

Mike: But some of that seems to come through in study, people clarify doctrines in study, but it is like I have consciously avoided making that sort of study effort which is going to, ... well for myself and I see it in some others, probably a minority in the Friends, it is almost as if there is an either or, between getting on with meditation and the sort of [325] non conceptual development of the mind, which we have so neglected or getting on with study.

S. Well in a sense it is an either-or question because if you do more than a certain amount of meditation you just don't want to get on with study and you shouldn't, you can combine a small amount of study and a small amount of meditation or you can combine a lot of study with a small amount of meditation, you cannot combine a lot of meditation with a lot of study. After a certain point the more meditation that you do, the less study you will do and will want to do.

Clive: Surely there is a balance, the more that you are doing of either you'll just...

S: no, because in study there is mental activity, whereas say supposing you are experiencing the dhyanas if you get beyond the first dhyana, there is not mental activity, you'll not ... the mind will not just feel like being active, well you will not feel like studying because studying means getting the mind working again, you see what I mean. So in fact Buddhaghosa in the Vissudhimagga classifies studying and teaching as one of the distractions as far as meditation is concerned. Certainly you can have a good meditation in the morning for an hour and a good meditation in the evening for an hour and during the day be doing quite a bit of study, but if you do say four, five, six hours meditation a day and are really into it, you have a disinclination

for study, but after as it were having exhausted your need for that amount of meditation for the time being, you can come back to study with a fresher, brighter mind and you will understand better than before and study better than before, but you cannot combine a lot of study and a lot of meditation say on a day to day basis. Rather than study you just feel like getting on with a bit more meditation or at least just sitting quietly not thinking about anything.

Murray. The Buddha then, he would have, well when he was moving about the world teaching, he would have been just predominantly dwelling in first and second dhyana, he wouldn't have gone beyond that?

S: Er, yes, the Buddha's insight, the Buddha's enlightenment, would be there, but he would not be in a high dhyana state, because he would be having to be aware of people, talking with them which would 'involve a certain amount of reflection, thinking, but it would be completely skilful and only what was necessary for the situation, no mental ticking over or anything like that, his thinking would be entirely directed thinking, no fantasizing for instance, Anyway we had better direct our thinking to the conclusion of, we'll have to finish the rest of the chapter in Tuscany.

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