

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

STUDY SEMINAR ON THE MAHAPARINIBBANA SUTTANTA

from the 'DIGHA NIKAYA' of the PALI CANON

Held at Padmaloka, 27 August - 6 September, 1982

Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Upasikas Anoma, Vidyasri, Sridevi, Sanghadevi, Bodhisri, Malini, Karola Adamszyk (now Ratnamegha), Viv Bartlett (now Punyamegha), Rachel Goody (now Vijayamala), Trish Manders (now Dayamegha), Carla Remy (now Khemasiri), Diana MacEwan, Judy Child, Liz Pankhurst (now Jayaprabha), Anne, Andrée (Now Karunacitta), Trisha Robertson (now Rupachitta)

Sangharakshita: So how far have you gone this morning? Who are the two study group leaders?

Sanghadevi: Myself and Anoma.

S: So have you sort of assembled questions?

Sanghadevi: Yes. But in our group it wasn't just myself that's been writing down questions, it's other people as well, so when we discuss something and realise we haven't understood something we write it down.

S: Good.

Sanghadevi: We had both tried to actually do the same amount of material but it seems that our group actually went on a bit further. Well the first one is what does '*Suttanta*' actually mean?

S: Ah yes. There's no real difference between the term '*Sutta*' and the term '*Suttanta*'. The literal meaning of the word is connected with the word for 'thread'. A '*Sutta*' is a thread. In modern Indian language, a '*Sutta*' means 'a thread' in the ordinary sense. So the term '*sutta*' implies a sort of thread of connection - it's a discourse in the sense that a number of topics are threaded together in a connected sort of way - you see what I mean? So '*Sutta*' or '*Suttanta*' comes to mean 'a connected discourse' in which quite a number of topics, a number of subjects, are strung together as though on a thread, one leading on to another. [Pause] '*Suttanta*' literally means something like 'the end of a *sutta*'. 'End' in the sense of 'essence of a *sutta*'. If you like a sort of condensed version of a discourse, you could say. If *sutta* means 'discourse', *suttanta* means something like 'a condensed version of a discourse, the substance of a discourse', though again the two are used quite interchangeably.

You could say that a *sutta* in its most general sense of 'a discourse delivered by the Buddha' is the standard form of Buddhist canonical literature. All the great Mahayana texts are *sutras*. That is to say, they're discourses purported to be given by the Buddha. So a '*sutta*', you could say, means 'a Buddhist scripture', a Buddhist text in the very widest sense. [Pause] Is that clear? [Pause]

So one speaks of the '*suttas*' of the *Digha Nikaya*, this *Mahaparinibbana sutta* or *suttanta* comes from the *Digha Nikaya*, the *suttas* of the *Majjhima Nikaya*. One doesn't usually speak of the *suttas* of say the *Samyutta Nikaya* because each section in the *Samyutta Nikaya* deals with one separate little topic; so usually the term '*sutta*' is not used for such short passages, such short texts, and one certainly speaks of the great Mahayana *sutras*, because they are quite long, quite connected, with very many topics strung together as it were, on one thread.

The Pali '*Sutta*' of course in Sanskrit is '*Sutra*'. And in Pali the term '*suttanta*' is used, but in Sanskrit they don't use, or don't usually use the term '*suttranta*' for some reason or other. They

simply say '*Sutra*'.

Vidyasri: Is this '*parinibbana*', is that in Pali?

S: In Sanskrit it would be '*parinirvana*'. This is from the *Digha Nikaya* of the Pali Canon - 'the collection of long discourses', which contains some of the oldest and most important Buddhist material. Though it isn't of course all equally old. You'll have noticed in the little introduction to this *sutta* it says, 'this *suttanta* is a composite work, in the sense of loosely assembled material of various dates. Because of its length only the oldest and salient features are here reproduced.' Some of the material in this *suttanta* is very old indeed, no doubt going back to the time of the Buddha perhaps to his own words actually.

Sanghadevi: So it's not that these sections are necessarily spoken in the last years of his life. I wondered why it was called '*Maha parinibbana*'....

S: Ah!

Sanghadevi: whether it did mean they were connected.

S: Well if one looks at the Buddha's biography, if one looks at the traditional versions of the Buddha's biography, one sees that there are two events of outstanding importance - one is the Enlightenment itself, and the other is the *parinirvana*. So we tend, in the Buddhist scriptures and in the traditional biographies, to have more information about the Enlightenment and what immediately follows, and about the *parinirvana* than about any other events in the Buddha's life; so it does seem that there were a number of disconnected teachings in circulation in the Buddhist community in the early days, and that when the scriptures were compiled, usually as oral traditions, the compiler then tried to place different sayings and discourses in particular contexts, so there was a tendency to try to fit them into either the events just following the Enlightenment, or the events just preceding the *parinirvana*. So in this way quite a lot of important teachings and traditions got incorporated into this constantly expanding '*Mahaparinibbana Sutta*', even quite late material, which later people, later monks, wanted to sort of tack onto the Buddha's teaching - they all found their place there, to give them a sort of authority and especially if it was about what the Buddha had said immediately before passing away, as part of his last message, it was of special importance. In this way, as the translator says, "this *suttanta* is a composite work containing loosely assembled material of various dates." Some of the material in this *sutta* is very old, no doubt going back to the Buddha himself. Other material may be a hundred, two hundred years later. So that later material the translator has just sort of dropped. We can tell very often from the language, that is to say from the Pali language, and we can also tell from the degree of doctrinal development involved whether it's early or late.

So in this particular shortened version one has got something nearer what might have been the original *Mahaparinibbana sutta*, though we can't be absolutely sure in that respect. Is that reasonably clear? There are a number of different versions: this is the Pali version; there are Sanskrit versions; there are Sanskrit Mahayana versions, which differ totally from this, they are completely different works. But they all purport to be accounts, records, of the Buddha's last days and his final teaching. There is a certain amount of material in common - the material that they all have in common - all these different versions - is probably part at least of the oldest strata. [Pause]

Is that reasonably clear? It's not such a straightforward a matter studying Buddhist texts as one might have thought! [Pause] It's like studying Shakespeare's plays and sort of puzzling between whether the quarto or the first folio version of a particular play, except it's more complicated, because there are many 'quartos' and many 'folios', some of them with lots of rescindings.

Sridevi: I was just looking at these three volumes of Mahayana Mahaparinirvana, and they are completely different.

S: It contains lots of stories and it's very badly translated. It's hardly readable.

Sanghadevi: We wondered about the incident with the Vajjians; the original context in which the Buddha gave them conditions for the stability of their society, like who approached the Buddha - was it some of their chief leaders was one question.

S: It was Ananda, as far as I remember. Ananda was standing behind the Buddha when messengers from Ajatasatru, the King of Magadha, came to the Buddha and asked him about the Vajjians.

Sanghadevi: Now what I meant was the original.... The Buddha had prior to that situation given the Vajjians instructions. It was that context we were wondering about.

S: Ah. As far as I know there is no record of a previous occasion in the scriptures. No. No. That seems to have dropped out, as far as I remember. We know of it only from this particular passage, which would suggest, if we take it literally, that the Buddha did take very seriously this question of the stability of societies, even in the quite mundane and quite secular sense, and subsequently extended it and applied it, on another level, to the Sangha itself as a spiritual society, a spiritual community.

Sanghadevi: Were the Vajjians a tribe or was there anything particular....

S: Well we say 'tribe', but we have to be careful of the connotations of that word. They were a Republican people like the Sakyans, and you probably know, at least you ought to know, that in the Buddha's day there were a number of different states in India. Some of them were monarchies and others were republics, as we would say. There were two - mainly two - large monarchies, those of Magadha and those of Kosala. The republics tended to be smaller, and the principal political act of the Buddha's lifetime was that of the expansion of the monarchies at the expense of the republics, and towards the end of his life it became a question whether Magadha would swallow up Kosala or Kosala would swallow up Magadha. Magadha eventually swallowed up Kosala and Magadha became not just the king of the Empire; Magadha which became, so to speak, the Empire of India, and all the republics were swallowed up, including the Sakya republic. But the Vajjis or Licchavis, they were one of the republican peoples of the Buddha's day with whom the Buddha seems to have had a very close association.

Sridevi: We were wondering whether the Buddha had any disciples from the Vajjians?

S: He seems to have had a lot of disciples, especially a lot of lay disciples, yes, yes.

_____ : Would you say the Vajjians and the Licchavis were the same?

S: Roughly speaking, yes. There was what was called a Vajji confederacy which was a loose confederacy of a number of republican tribes. [Pause]

Sanghadevi: Going on into the section where the Buddha is actually talking to the bhikkhus about their establishments - the section where he was talking about - as long as the bhikkhus were not going to declare rules, do not abolish rules - we were wondering exactly what the rules were and what the ethical practices and.....

S: Yes, I think we have to be careful here. We may even detect a later Ananda, so to speak. Because if we look at what seems to be the Buddha's own teaching, what appears to be the oldest portions of the Canon, the Buddha did not place undue emphasis on rules, and as we would say, he stressed principles rather than rules. So the question arises, well what is meant by this particular passage here, 'as long as the bhikkhus do not declare rules, do not abolish rules, living according to the rules of study and discipline they have taken on themselves, so long may they be expected to prosper and not to go into decline'. I would say the emphasis here is "they have taken on themselves". If on mature consideration, on mature reflection, you take upon yourself a certain discipline, you take it upon yourself to observe a certain principles, to put certain principles into practise, or even if you take upon yourself a sort of certain rule - if you go as far as that, if you in full responsibility have taken that, then it is up to you to keep that. No one asked you to take it, you did it of your own free will: having taken it you must be true to it. This is, in a way, the essence of commitment. Not that it is just a question of following the rules, but you first of all consider what is your present position, what are your spiritual needs, what are the practices you need to follow, then you commit yourself to them. Having made that commitment, you honour it. I think this is more what the Buddha is emphasising, not that rules are important as such and must be obeyed at all costs - But having undertaken to follow a particular course, a particular way of life, to embody a certain principle, or even to observe a particular rule, having of your own free will taken that upon yourself, you owe it to yourself to remain true to that. Not to try to change the rule after you have promised to observe it, and that's cheating, so to speak (chuckles). You see what I mean?

Sanghadevi: Would that link up with the previous one where the Buddha is talking about duty? What are called their duties, that simile in.....

S: I think we have to be careful of the English connotations of the word 'duties'. It means 'what they have to do'. What is appropriate to them as bhikkhus - not 'duty' in the sense of something laid upon them by some external authority. These are 'duties', if one wants to use that word, that they have laid upon themselves, that they've taken up willingly. You promise yourself that you'll do something, so you owe it to yourself to keep your promise to yourself, as well as to your spiritual friends, in whose presence, perhaps, you've made that promise. [Pause]

I mean there's the story in this connection in the Jatakas of the wolf who observes the *uposatha*, the fast day - do you remember this? Well there was a wolf and he was hungry, but while he was hungry there was a great flood, and he was very nearly swept away and he just managed to scramble onto a log that was floating on the flood, and he was there for several days and he got more and more hungry, and then he realised it was a full moon day and he said, 'Ah, never mind, it's the full moon day, I'll observe the fast today, I won't eat anything' [*Laughter*] But just as he decided not to eat anything because it was the *uposatha* day, another piece of wood came floating by and on it was a lamb. [*Laughter*] And that piece of wood floated very near to the piece of wood on which the wolf was, so he thought, 'Ah well my good karma has sent me this opportunity, I can observe the fast some other time', so he made a snap at the lamb, but just at that moment a sudden eddy in the water carried that log out of his reach, so he didn't get the lamb, the he said, 'Ah well then, I suppose I can observe the *uposatha* all!' [*Laughter*] You see what I mean? So one's determination to observe a rule or principle shouldn't vary, shouldn't fluctuate in that kind of way - having resolved to observe it well one must adhere to that resolution. Anyway that's the point of the story.

Sanghadevi: In the next section where it's talking about respecting and venerating the elders - I was wondering whether there was a necessary overlap between people who were the elders and people who were the leaders - Is it getting at you should respect the people who have been in the Sangha for a long time but they need not necessarily be the actual leaders of the Sangha.

S: Ah well yes and no. When the Buddha speaks of 'elders', that is those who have been in the Sangha a long time, he doesn't mean those who have simply been in the Sangha in a nominal sense a long time. He means those who've been practising as monks for a long time, who have been making a genuine effort as monks for a long time, so therefore, when he speaks of *Theras*, he means those who are superior, not just in years, but in terms of actual insight and experience, so they should be venerated, they should be respected and looked up to, not just because they've spent more years in the robes, but because they are actually more experienced! You see what I mean? So this is the first point - but it also is a fact that people might be in the Sangha, year after year, and not really make much progress, and they might be well overtaken by junior people, so what happens then? Normally, under ideal circumstances at least, it's the ones who are the seniormost in years and also in experience, who take the lead. But what is one to do when those who are technically senior aren't actually the more experienced ones? Well those who are really more experienced, even though they are junior in years, they have to take the lead, and this sometimes happens.

But even when they do that, on certain occasions at least they show respect to those who are senior in years, well partly because well even if they haven't made much progress, they've stuck it out, (*chuckles*) at least they've remained nominally members and also it isn't a bad thing as a sort of discipline, even if you are maybe more advanced than other people, that there is someone that you have to respect, at least outwardly. It's a bit of a curb on, perhaps, the exuberance of the younger ones who, on account of their admittedly greater experience, have taken over the lead. It is rather a fine point.

So one does see - I've seen this myself - in the Sangha in the bhikkhu Sangha in the East, that very often it is the young monks who are really taking the lead, doing everything, organising everything, but they continue to pay a certain respect to the older monks who are taking a back seat, and who may not be, in fact, very capable or spiritually mature. One can respect someone for length of service even though not accompanied by any obvious results - at least length of service has its own value. But nonetheless one must clearly distinguish between simple length of service, so to speak, and genuine superiority of spiritual attainment. It is the latter that is to be really respected rather than the former. But one must be careful not to look down on those who haven't made such rapid progress as perhaps some of their younger contemporaries. [Pause]

Of course another point is it's not always easy to say who has made progress sometimes. In some cases of progress may be pretty obvious, in other cases it may not, also it has to be measured against the original starting point, one has to remember that too. Some people who may not seem to have made much progress may have had to start by overcoming a severe handicap which others might not have had to do.

Sanghadevi: Another question which particularly sticks in my mind from our group, in the section where it's talking about the bhikkhus 'as long as the bhikkhus should individually be mindful, so that in the future men of attainment in the religious life should come to them.' We've wondered was that talking about people who've got the potential to practise the religious life, the Sangha actually attracting people like that, or was it talking about people who already in a sense have attained something (unclear) and joined the Sangha.

S: Well it could apply to both: But the general point is certainly made by the Buddha on more than one occasion that the Sangha - he was speaking about the bhikshu sangha - it applies to the spiritual community in general - should maintain itself in such a way that it is attractive to people outside, it should be open to people outside coming in and, so to speak, joining in. It shouldn't become a closed corporation, it shouldn't become exclusive, it should maintain itself in such a way that people coming from the outside, so to speak, are welcome, are made welcome, or made to feel welcome, made to feel that they too can join, it is open to them to join if they just make the

necessary effort. [Pause]

There is also - 'as long as the bhikkhus shall individually be mindful, so that, in the future, men of attainment in the religious life' - that's to say worthy candidates, so to speak - shall come to them, and men of attainment who have already come, shall live at ease'. That is to say the spiritual community should so organise itself that those who are already members of the spiritual community shall be able to live happily, continue to live happily, as members of the spiritual community, and also so that newcomers may be made welcome, be encouraged to join them. In other words: consolidation as well as expansion, or expansion as well as consolidation.

Anoma: I think some of those questions answer ours as well, in fact, I left people individually just to make their own questions.

S: All right.

Anoma: Actually, there is one thing - I don't know if I can formulate the question - that came up in our group that I am not clear about; particularly when we were talking about bhikkhus attending frequently - going back to the first point - it came up that if you'd seen originally there was value in doing this, in fact, in doing any of these, but then lost sight, lost touch with it, but still did it because you knew you had been in touch with it, so you had faith in that, so that even if you didn't want to go to an Order Weekend or whatever, you went because you knew there was value in it, then that would hopefully get back in touch - but then somebody made the point that, well, then there was the danger of just doing it out of an observance, that this could just degenerate into being.....

Sanghadevi: Simply a habit.

Anoma: Yes. Simply a habit. But I'm still a bit confused in my mind, ah,

S: I'm not sure what the question is actually (Laughter) but one general point - this applies not only to things like the Order meetings, Order weekends, it also applies to things like retreats, or even living in a community - I know it is the experience of a number of people that you can forget how good it is to be at a weekend or on a retreat, if you leave it too long - you see what I mean? So let's take the case of being on retreat because that's the most common experience. It applies to non Order members as well as Order members - you can be on retreat and have a really wonderful retreat and thoroughly enjoy it, but maybe after that, just due to force of circumstances, for a while you are not able to go on retreat, even though you want to, well, what happens is that in the end the memory of that original retreat fades, you forget how good it was, you get out of touch with your own experience on that retreat. You forget, so that when someone suggests, "Well why not go on retreat", even when you've got the opportunity you don't want to go because you've forgotten what it was like - so then you have to go so to speak, more out of a sense of, not exactly duty, but a sort of more intellectual understanding that it's good to go on retreats, even though you can no longer recall your original experience of going on a retreat, but once you actually go on retreat again, well, again you get back into the feeling - "What a fool I was, how stupid to get out of touch to that extent and leave it so long." But what is important here is, to prevent it becoming just a sort of observance, is that the retreat must be a real retreat and that depends of course not just on you but on other people. There must be other people who are keeping it all going, even though you are not. So that when you do go on retreat again after an interval, there is really a retreat for you to go on, to be on, to experience, the same with Order Meetings and Order weekends. I mean, if everybody forgets and everybody gets out of touch, well when you do eventually get together, if you get together you might be a pretty miserable collection of individuals (Chuckles, laughter) you might start wondering why on earth you are there, why you bother to come.

Anoma: I suppose that is what I was getting at. Are these conditions - if you follow those conditions does that guarantee that you won't get out of touch ... or that you get back in touch (?)

S: Yes. Because that assumes that there is a sufficiently large number of people keeping in touch. It assumes that getting out of touch is the exception rather than the rule. (Pause) But of course even if everybody has got out of touch and have got together just out of general intellectual conviction well, you can ask yourselves, "Well, why are we here, what are we supposed to do? (Laughter) But even if you do it sincerely, even without much feeling at first, gradually, no doubt some recollection of some experience will gradually revive and you'll slowly get back into things.

Voices: Mm.

S: I think a number of people have had that experience of getting out of touch for a while just forgetting how good a retreat or similar occasion can be. It's amazing what one can forget - and the extent to which you can get out of touch with your own past experience. It can be as though it had never been. Whereas at the time you might have thought "Well, I'm never going to forget this. This is the most wonderful experience of my life", but after a year you might have forgotten it completely.

_____: Why do you think that is? Why? If you've got such a strong feeling at a retreat and you come back and why do you lose it?

S: Well, why does one lose it? If you've lost it, you should know why! (Laughter) There'd be nothing perhaps in your daily life seems that to sustain it, or to develop it, and it's as though your mind can just take in one particular band of experience at a time - if it's been focused on a rather dull, ordinary type of experience, well, it just loses touch with anything different from that.

Karola: Well conversely how would you one maintain that?

S: That depends on one's whole way of life. The best way of retaining it would perhaps be to stay on retreat (Laughter) Or while one is on retreat and in that state should think, oh well, look, I must be very careful, I mustn't lose this. What must I do not to lose it? I must come again on retreat as soon as I can. I must live in a community. I must go along to the Centre regularly. I must see more of my spiritual friends etc., or I must give up my late night visits to the movies, or give up smoking and things like that. (Long Pause)

All right - What else have you got?

_____: Could we take any of those groups in isolation. Would they be sufficient to maintain stability of society, or, just (?)

S: I don't think the Buddha intends them to be mutually exclusive. I think they do all overlap. I think if you had one in any depth or to any intensity you'd tend to have the others, because you would want a really live continuing spiritual community. All these different sets of conditions, they represent different angles of approach to maintaining the continuity of the spiritual community. They all help. Maybe some of them help more at one time than at another. (Pause)

Was there any question about "withdrawing to the seclusion of the forest"? I would have expected someone to ask (Laughter) if it was absolutely necessary or not - "withdrawing to the seclusion of the forest" - was there any point arising in connection with that? Or did you all take it in your stride as a matter of course that you would want to withdraw into the forest. (Laughter)

Anoma: We didn't actually get that far (Voices)

S: Sorry - did any of you get to that? The other group must have done. Did the other group consider this question?

Sanghadevi: We tended to see it more in our own experience of perhaps trying to get on retreats or trying to go off on solitary retreats.

S: Yes, right.

Sanghadevi: Would that be seen as going off collectively, as well as individually?

S: I think going off individually was meant, because one assumes the bhikkhus were leading a sort of idyllic life; in their little community on the outskirts of the village, but from time to time they would need to withdraw even from that, because it's necessary to make sure that the spiritual community is a genuine spiritual community, isn't just a positive group, and a genuine spiritual community is one that is made up of individuals, so how can you know that you are an individual - you can know that you are an individual, or one way of knowing that you are an individual and not just a happy member of a positive group, is by going away and being on your own and discovering that you are happy when on your own, you like yourself, you experience yourself more intensely, more positively, so that when you do come back into the spiritual community you can be more effectively a member of the spiritual community than ever, and the spiritual community itself can be more of a spiritual community itself, can be more of a spiritual community and evolve, because of your enhanced individuality. So if you are all doing that from time to time, it certainly contributes to the development and maintenance of the spiritual community as such. You never settle down into being simply a positive group, however good that may be. You come back freshly charged, more as an individual, even if you go away for a weekend on your own, it makes a difference. I think many of you have experienced this - you bounce back from solitary retreat very much more of an individual, and others can often recognise that. You come back with that far away look in your eyes - (Laughter) having just looked at mountains and landscapes for weeks on end. [Laughter] (Long pause)

_____ : If that's how we become individuals what's to prevent us from doing it full time?

S: That's one of the ways in which we become individuals. I won't say it's the only way - because there's meditation, there's study, there's communication. All these things help us to be individuals. Also there is such a thing as the law of diminishing returns. It's true that if you go away on a solitary retreat, say, for a month, you can come back greatly enhanced as an individual, but it doesn't follow though that if you were away for ten months you'd come back ten times more enhanced as an individual. It is quite an important point to know when you've had enough for the time being. Just as half an hour's meditation may do you a lot of good, but if you just grit your teeth and go on sitting there all day, it doesn't necessarily do you a lot more good. So one has to make use of these different methods at different times. One time you go away on a solitary retreat, another time you make a point of being with people, you meditate, you study, you go out running, all these things help in different ways at different times.

Karola: Is it like what's appropriate for you at that particular time?

S: And you have to keep an eye on yourself all the time and not just get into any purely mechanical routine which you're not relating to what you're actually experiencing and feeling.

Viv: What about in terms of our commitment in deciding to go on solitary retreat for a month and after a fortnight - I've never done one so I don't know - but after a fortnight deciding that that was enough? There must be a fine line between deciding between whether you stay on or whether it's time to go back.

S: Yes. Well usually one encourages people to stick to what they have decided to do. But that isn't a hard and fast rule. You may genuinely have misjudged your needs, or your strength even, and you may genuinely feel after two weeks, even though you've booked a caravan for a month, well, two weeks is quite all right for the time being, more would be perhaps counter productive, so all right, change your mind, but don't change it lightly. Be quite sure about this. Has this ever happened to anybody? Because you can change it the other way round, providing the caravan hasn't been booked immediately afterwards by somebody else. You can say well look a month isn't nearly enough, let me have another month, and stay on another month, you can decide that too. But perhaps if you haven't been on a solitary retreat before you shouldn't be too positive about how long you're going to stay. Well "I'll give it a week and if I feel that it will be useful to stay on for a further week, all right I'll keep the caravan booked for that further week, and I can stay on if I feel it's appropriate, not well I can just leave after a week. Recognise that if you haven't had these experiences before, you have no way of knowing how you're going to take it or how it's going to affect you.

Vidyasri: On my first solitary I decided to do a month and it felt like a prison sentence. (Laughter) I did do it but I found it difficult to stick to that. It felt over ambitious.

S: Of course, if you are the sort of person who is always changing their mind, well it might be an additional reason to stick it out, even though you are finding it very difficult. But if you are that quite conscientious, mindful sort of person, well there's no harm if you do revise your programme. Let's say not exactly changing your mind - just revising it in the light of experience. You don't have to feel you've failed because you haven't stayed as long as you've booked (Pause) Any further questions on that?

Sanghadevi: That part that says losing control of the arising of cravings.

End of Side One Side Two

Sanghadevi: it seems to suggest maybe you're at the point where you're still experiencing cravings, well, I mean, you've actually got to the point where you experience your craving but actually you've got to kind of control that - it's not talking about guarding yourself from even getting into cravings. You've gone further on the wheel of life, "contact", "feeling" and you've got into "craving" - you've got to break it there rather than to

S: You could say you do not lose control of the arising of cravings because you watch your reactions to pleasurable sensations so carefully that the cravings have no opportunity of arising. One can take it in that way - to control the arising of the cravings. In other words you prevent the arising of the cravings. The sort of bhikkhu, or sort of spiritual community member that the Buddha seemed to have in mind is one who is still very much making an effort, one who hasn't become a 'stream entrant'; one who still has to make a continual choice between the reactive and the creative, 'the round' and 'the spiral'. I mean, the craving leading to rebirth stands for the whole sort of cyclic process as opposed to the spiral process. So the Buddha is saying that the spiritual community does not decline so long as people make a continual effort to bridge the gap, to make the transition, from the process of the reactive to the process of the creative, from 'the round' to 'the spiral'.

Sanghadevi: The same with somebody who is a stream entrant - they still haven't overcome

craving until much later on, so I mean, although in one sense they're meant to be - they're not going to fall back in that sense, perhaps they still have, in a sense, to practise control of craving.

S: Well, yes, because if you don't you'll simply remain a stream-entrant, instead of progressing to becoming a 'once returner' and a 'non-returner' and so on. So if you want to achieve further progress you must go on making that kind of effort. But even if you don't, you won't fall back into lower states of existence, that is to say sub-human states. You won't be reborn as a preta or as an asura, or in a state of suffering and so on or as a preta.

Liz: What, if you're watching, do you mean?

S: No, having become a stream-entrant?

Sanghadevi: So if you don't make an effort beyond that, in a sense, you stay sort of a healthy human.

S: Not as a stream-entrant, you're more than a healthy human, you're definitely on the transcendental path, but you don't make further progress on it (Pause)

_____ : So are you reborn as a stream-entrant then Bhante?

S: Yes, yes. You're reborn as a stream-entrant, but according to the Theravada tradition, not more than seven times because the momentum that you have built up is such that your progress will be very rapid.

Anoma: Doesn't that imply that you couldn't actually stay as a stream-entrant?

S: Not for very long. No. You've got into the stream, the stream is carrying you along, except the stream is also you, you're not completely separate from the stream. You can rest on your 'oars' for a little while but not for very long. (Pause)

_____ : In section seven, is the Buddha suggesting that the bhikkhus don't have anything to do with worldly activities at all? If so, how do we apply that to ourselves?

S: Don't work outside a co-op (Laughter) One must remember that the bhikkhus were supported, they were housed, they were fed, they were clothed, they didn't need to concern themselves with worldly activities, they could just get on with their meditation and their study or the Dharma, but we're not quite in that position. Also circumstances have changed, the world has changed, society is organised differently. We live under a different more complex economic system, and so on, so what is meant within this present context of ours, by not being devoted to or engaged in worldly activities? Well, what does it really mean, 'worldly activities'. What is the essential point of the definition?

Liz: Is it moving away from the spiritual path.

S: Mm. Is it moving away from the spiritual path - does it contribute to your development as an individual or does it not? It's not whether it's labelled 'worldly' or not - whether it's labelled 'worldly' or 'religious', the activity itself, in itself, perhaps, is neither one or the other, or can be one or can be the other according to circumstances, according to your degree or level of development. So 'engaging in worldly activity', will mean, 'engaging in', 'spending time on', 'devoting energy to' those activities which either do not contribute to your development or will actually pull you back, pull you down. Give a few examples.

Liz: I was thinking it just seems so hard, once you're actually involved, working in co-ops and things, to actually know whether it's having a good or bad effect. (Laughter)

S: Well, that's true of a great many things because it takes time. It's true for instance of meditation. Perhaps it's only after several years of meditation you begin to perceive a real positive effect on yourself, on your mind; or even only after several years perhaps of spiritual friendship it begins really to 'bite' and take effect. Only after perhaps several years of study you begin really to penetrate the Dharma. It does take time. (Pause) But I think there are things which have a negative effect very quickly. One can see that. If you go to too many late night parties and have too many hangovers, well you can see the effect it is having on you very quickly. You don't need to go on in that way for years and years (Laughter) before realising the effect it is having on you. So one just has to scrutinise one's life, and one's activities especially if one is living in a city like London where there are many distractions. You can get involved so easily. There are so many things that have nothing to do with the spiritual life at all. Just a daze or stupefying - they're just distractions. I'm not saying, of course, you should always be working, in the narrow sense of the term. I'm not saying there shouldn't be any pleasure or enjoyment in life, that is also necessary, even necessary to your development as an individual; it can't all be a dull and dry and hard grind and slog. If it is it isn't probably really the spiritual life, but you won't be (?). You may need to do that for short periods from time to time - maybe due to force of circumstances, but you shouldn't all the time. The spiritual life isn't really a continual penance (Laughter) You don't always have to be putting dried peas in your boots and things like that. (Laughter)

But yes, be very clear about what is really contributing to your spiritual development and what isn't. Be as clear as you can, and I'm sure about certain things you can be clearer, these things just don't help at all, it's pretty obvious (Pause) It's quite difficult to categorise activities as such, as either 'worldly' or 'spiritual'. We have to think much more specifically in terms of the effect of certain activities on ourselves. For instance, suppose you go into say an art gallery. Is that a worldly activity or is it a spiritual activity? You could say it's a sort of borderline case - it depends very much on you and your circumstances. It depends on your motive. Maybe on the type of art that you look at. You could just wander into an art gallery out of boredom or frustration. On the other hand you may go in search of inspiration and you may find that, and that will give you a general sort of lift (Pause) Any further points?

_____ : How much do these conditions apply to the spiritual community rather than to the positive group?

S: Well they apply in principle to any spiritual community and to a positive group to the extent that it aspires to be a spiritual community. If it is thinking in terms of developing into a spiritual community. We have to try and see the principles involved here, because the Buddha is addressing the bhikkhus in ancient India. The principles are pretty clear, but the precise mode of application, the then-and-now, may not be the same, as we saw in this question of going off into the forest. Perhaps that may well mean going on solitary retreat, or just going on a retreat even (Pause) I think we have to try and understand the principle involved and then see clearly our own particular situation and apply that principle to this situation. (Pause)

There's one little point here I didn't touch upon in that paragraph - "As long as the bhikkhus are happy in withdrawing to the seclusion of the forest" - you don't go off regretfully. If you go off regretfully, it means you have become accustomed to the warmth and security of the group. When you've spent sufficient length of time with other members of the spiritual community, well, you should go quite happily off 'into the forest', off on solitary retreat, to experience yourself in, so to speak, isolation, so that you can enjoy when you come back again, an enhanced sense of spiritual

community because you are just so much more an individual when you return. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: When it talks about the bhikkhus individually being mindful, is it really talking about their whole way of practice in terms of that that attracts certain people?

S: Mindfulness of course is stressed very, very much by the Buddha, especially stressed for the bhikkhus, or you could say well it's stressed for anyone who is trying to live a spiritual life, and the point is quite often made, in the ancient texts, and the ancient traditions, that it was the mindfulness of a Buddha's followers that drew many people to him or to the Sangha, because one mustn't forget in those days there were no books, you didn't become impressed by the Buddha or by his Sangha, by his spiritual movement, by reading about them, you became impressed by hearing about them from other people, or by seeing them. You may not have heard of the Buddha before, you may not have heard of the Sangha, you may not even have known what a bhikkhu was. But one day you might just have encountered someone who seemed much more happy, much more under control, much more mindful, much more calm and peaceful than anybody else you had seen, so this strikes you and you want to know, well, why is this person like this? Why is he so calm, why is he so mindful? And mindfulness is something that shows. If you are really mindful, and if you are really positive, really happy, people take note of that, if they take note of anything, and they'll want to know why.

So it's the way that you are, the kind of life that you seem to be leading, seem to be living, that will attract other people. Supposing you are working in an office. Suppose you are the most friendly, radiant person in that office, people may start wondering why is she always so radiant, always so happy, so friendly, smiling - you always arrive on time (Laughter), always, puts in a friendly word for everybody else in the office, well what is her secret? (Laughter) And so they might ask her one day, and she tells them she lives in a women's community (Loud laughter) and this is so. Maybe they'll want to know more about women's communities, more about Buddhism, more about meditation (Pause)

Anoma: We met this woman on the bus coming out here _ I think she lives in Surlingham - and she'd seen some of the guys from here, and been quite impressed and then she realised we were all Buddhist, so she got into conversation with Ashokasri and was asking her loads of questions (Laughter)

S: Well, the best advertisement for Buddhism is you. (Pause) Perhaps you don't always appreciate the sort of effect that you have on other people 'out in the world', so to speak. I mean, I've often felt this, especially when I come down to London, when I'm giving a talk, or I have some function in the shrine room, just say a hundred, a hundred and twenty people, it's really noticeable that they're much more happy and positive than the people that one meets outside in the street in any part of London, or that one sees on the Tube. There's definitely a marked difference; and so there should be. It would be surprising if there wasn't. So anyone with half an eye open would be able to see this and just might one day in some cases, ask well, why is this person more positive, more confident, more happy? What makes them 'tick' in this particular way?

Sanghadevi: I think we can underestimate what we have actually developed in ourselves.

S: Yes.

Sanghadevi: When you're actually, all the time, moving quite closely in circles with other people who are also practising.

S: Yes, right. I think for this reason, quite a few people in the FWBO even people who are quite

positively and deeply involved in it, underestimate it, just because they are so deeply and positively involved in it. They've almost forgotten how bad it is 'back in the world'. So some little blemish maybe, in their particular co-op, or their particular community, they just make too much of it sometimes. They just forget how much worse things are outside. They've almost forgotten how much better they themselves are perhaps. Well, maybe they haven't noticed because obviously you live with yourself all the time and you don't notice these little changes, but maybe someone hasn't seen you for a few years, and then they meet you, and they feel you've totally changed and different. They may not be able to understand it, they may be a bit puzzled, they may not be very happy about Buddhism, if they hear that you're involved with Buddhism, but they cannot but concede that you are a happier, more positive person than you were. Even one's relations notice it sometimes. (Pause) Even your mother might have to admit it. (Laughter) Even your children might notice it. (Long pause)

I think it's quite important and why perhaps we should sometimes penetrate out into the world. Even though, yes, we're based in communities, and we're based in co-ops, but I think we shouldn't be afraid to press out into the world, even go and work in the world for a while and give people the benefit of our sweetness and light for a while. And maybe make some fresh contacts perhaps you wouldn't have made otherwise. If we feel sufficiently strong, we should feel quite able to do this. There isn't any reason why we shouldn't. Your community and your co-op isn't something you sort of huddle in and sort of evade the world. It's a base from which you go out to meet the world and change it. That means meeting people and changing them and helping them to change (Pause)

Some of you, I know, are doing that already and so there's no need to labour the point. You don't all work in co-ops or live in communities. Quite a few of you don't. (Pause)

Anything more? Any final point? You feel you've a good start this morning? Got into the *sutta* or *suttanta*? All right, let's leave it there for this morning. Maybe the two groups could do their best to remain in step. I know it is difficult to remain in consultation.

[End of Session]

[Tape 2 Next Session]

Anoma: Well, we (cough) didn't quite manage to get to the same point, but we agreed only to ask questions up to the end of section eight.

S: All right.

So it's basically seven and eight, be a few questions from our group from the previous

S: So who's shooting off first?

_____ : I know there were various questions from our group.

S: Are they asking their own questions?

_____ : Well, we got into talking about the Sangha and I was wondering if you could say a bit about it, um,... (laughter) What we were talking about was in the context of the Sangha as communication, um, ... there was a feeling that it was a little bit more than just communication. Could you talk a bit about that?

S: Well, yes, you are right in thinking that it is at least a little bit more than communication. I mean,

communication is important, but the question does arise: What is the basis of one's communication? I don't mean simply in the sense of what one talks about, but the reason why you communicate - what it is in the light of which you communicate; so, in the case of the Sangha, the basis of the communication is your common commitment as members of the Sangha, to an ideal, to a spiritual ideal, to what we usually call the Ideal of Enlightenment; or, you might say the 'ideal of perfect individuality' with a capital 'I'.

So when you communicate on that basis, you're communicating on the basis of that common ideal, and you try to communicate in such a way that each of you - that is to say those of you who are parties to the communication - can be helped to grow in the direction of that ideal. Do you see what I mean?

So that the context of the Sangha, communication without a basis in that ideal doesn't really have very much significance. You might say communication in the absence of that ideal is quite a different thing from communication in the presence of that ideal.

For instance to go into it in a bit more detail- if one communicates, well why should one *try* to communicate truthfully? What is the reason for that truthful communication? Why do you want to be open? Why do you want to be honest? What is the purpose of it? Where does it lead? Do you see what I mean?

So it's as though the ideal of human development, the ideal of human enlightenment, gives human communication an infinitely greater significance than it would otherwise possess. It enables you to go so much more deeply into communication, it gives you so much more of a reason for communicating - not that you need to be talking about Enlightenment all the time, that isn't necessary, but it's implied that this is what, through your communication, by means of your communication, among other things, you're working towards.

_____ : I mean would you say that if you were communicating in that sense then you would be experiencing Sangha?

S: If you were communicating in that sense, yes, you would be experiencing the Sangha. Yes. It might be with one other person, it might be two or three, it might be with eight or ten, but you would be experiencing the Sangha, yes. (Pause) But having just a good rap with somebody, that's different, it may be very enjoyable, but it definitely is not that, communication in that sense, and doesn't take place, therefore, within the Sangha. (Pause)

Vidyasri: I felt when we were talking about that, that what often tends to happen is that either people feel sort of drawn towards keeping in touch with their practice and their meditation, and that side of things; or drawn towards being with people, and that somehow Sangha embraces them both, and that it's just quite easy even for us as mitras and Order members to actually, somewhere, miss the point of Sangha somehow - of seeing it as a sort of either as the group or as the individual, and not as the individual relating with other individuals.

S: Well, it's true that in order to be a member of the Sangha, to communicate as a member of the Sangha, you have to be an individual first, at least to some extent, and it may be necessary, to sort of strengthen your sense of individuality, to withdraw, say, into solitary retreat from time to time, so that you can be sure that you are not just becoming a member of a group; but nonetheless, at the same time, when one comes back, say, from that period of withdrawal, having experienced oneself as an individual more, you re-establish communication with other similar people, and your communication then is a communication between individuals, and this can add an extra dimension to your whole spiritual experience, even to your experience of individuality, because if you as an indi-

vidual, a real individual in the spiritual sense, are in communication with another individual - a real individual in the spiritual sense, well this communication will heighten your mutual sense of individuality. Of course the greater the number of people involved, the more careful you have to be that the situation doesn't degenerate into a group situation, even though it may be a very happy, healthy, positive, group. You see what I mean? But assuming that a certain measure of individuality has been established independently, then your interaction with other individuals, as individuals, can only enhance your experience of individuality, not diminish it. If you feel a bit overwhelmed by the spiritual community, the chances are that you are taking the spiritual community as a group, and are not experiencing yourself sufficiently as an individual. So if that happens, well, by all means withdraw from the spiritual community if you are experiencing it as a group, and strengthen your sense of individuality, then come back. (Pause)

Sridevi: Would you say that commitment to (unclear) is something more than commitment to communicate in that way within the spiritual community?

S: Well one can say there are two kinds of communication: one might say there is, to use familiar terminology, a horizontal communication and a vertical communication, and both are necessary. Now what does one mean by 'horizontal communication'? By horizontal communication one means communication with one's spiritual peers, that is to say those who are roughly on the rung of the spiritual ladder as you are yourself; and by vertical communication one means communication with those who are either above or below you - either occupying higher rungs or occupying lower rungs on that same ladder, but especially with those who are occupying higher rungs on the same ladder, because that will stretch you more. You need both kinds of communication. So this is why '*kalyana mitrata*', in the sense of communication, association with those who are more developed than yourself, is very necessary. This does enable one to grow more quickly.

Vidyasri: You said if you feel overwhelmed by the group...

S: Mm.

Vidyasri: ... maybe it's because your experience of yourself isn't individual enough...

S: No. If you felt overwhelmed by the spiritual community and therefore experienced the spiritual community as a group.

Vidyasri: As a group, right.

S: Even though it is not.

Vidyasri: Yes. But maybe the answer would be to withdraw, but do you think that I mean... because if it is a spiritual community and it is not a group, would it not be as well to stay in it and ...

S: Could be, according to circumstances but if you were feeling yourself getting more and more overwhelmed and oppressed, and experiencing negative feelings and hating the spiritual community, well it may be better to withdraw if it gets as extreme as that.

Vidyasri: Yes.

S: Or it may be better to withdraw from contact with a lot of other members of the spiritual community at the same time, and concentrate on communicating with one or two, because it could be that your own sense of individuality - even your ordinary self confidence - is quite weak and you are threatened by all these strong vigorous people (laughter). You see what I mean? (Pause)

Anoma: It seems quite important then to stay in touch with the fact that it is that you are seeing the spiritual community as a group and if you do withdraw, to know why you are doing it.

S: Yes, yes!

Anoma: It's not because they are a group, even though you are experiencing...

S: We are assuming that the spiritual community really is functioning as a spiritual community not as a group, because one has to recognise that a spiritual community is not - I mean we are talking now within the context of the FWBO - not a sort of fixed or static thing. You get a collection of people, let's say, even living together in a residential spiritual community, sometimes they may function as a spiritual community, but at other times there may be unfortunate lapses, they may just function as a positive group, or even as a negative group, or even not even as a group at all, so it isn't always your fault, you have to look and actually see what is happening. You may be the only person who is in step. There is that possibility too; in that case, if you genuinely feel that you are the only one who is behaving and practising as an individual, that the others in the community for instance have just sunk to the group level, well you must try by tackling individuals, just to get them to see that. If you are wrong well they will get you to see that, but you certainly just mustn't not do anything about it, and if you feel that your community is functioning more as a group, if you feel that you must say so, have it out with them. That can only do good provided that you tackle the question in a positive manner.

Liz: Is it important to tackle people on an individual basis then?

S: Yes I think, because if you suspect that the spiritual community is functioning as a group, if you try to tackle the group as a group you will have the group against you if it is a group; but if you get people on their own, I think there is a better chance of getting them to respond as individuals. (Pause) At least you can put things across to them more clearly, perhaps more forcibly, in a way that they can appreciate better. Any more questions about the Sangha and communication?

Liz: I had a question which was related to... you talked about horizontal and vertical communication, and, well, it was a bit later on that we were talking about evil companions, and sometimes it's quite hard to tell, and if you've actually built up some sort of friendship with somebody that you know maybe that it's taking a lot of energy and time and it's not always very productive, it's quite hard to know when to withdraw.

S: Well in other Buddhist texts, the criteria by mean of which one can know evil companions are given as a rule of thumb, or rules of thumb. One tells them by the sort of activities into which they lead you. Do you see what I mean? In one particular context evil companions are those who are always inviting you to go off with them drinking and dancing and dicing and gambling and all the rest of it; well that's a very crude example, but very often you can apply this sort of criteria, that evil companions are those who, because of your attachments to them, lead you into participation in activities which you perhaps don't really want to participate in, but you participate just to please them, though the activity may not be at all good for you, you may not even really enjoy them, and just for the sake of being agreeable and a good companion, you agree to go along and take part. It's as though there is a conflict between your need to develop, and your need perhaps for human companionship, which is again a genuine need; I mean, this is where the kalyana mitrata becomes all important. You can't get along really without friends. I think you have to acknowledge that, as a human being you can't live without friends, so you have got to be all the more sure that the friends are good friends, that they are kalyana mitras, because if you don't have good friends, you will have bad friends or at least friends who are indifferent, neither good nor bad. Maybe that's difficult,

maybe they will just be a little bit bad, or just a little bit good, but you see what I mean. You have to make up your mind to the fact that you can't really survive without friends so you might as well look out for spiritual friends, those who will help you on your chosen path and not lead you astray from it.

Rachel: That sounds to me a bit as if you are looking at the friends from a point of weakness rather than a point of strength.

S: Well I think to begin with, you do, because you want to grow, you want to develop and friends can help you do that, not necessarily because they are stronger or more developed than you, but just because you are both interested in the same things, you are committed to the same things, well, you can encourage each other.

Vidyasri: What did you mean by that rather than you helping them, say going out with somebody that then you might have a good influence on them, that one is approaching it from the other way round. Is that your feeling?

Rachel: Yes. It's sort of rather than a positive coming together because you are actually both going towards an ideal...

S: Well that is implied

Rachel: you're in a sort of need.

S: Well that is implied, all right you've got your sort of devotional commitment to the ideal, but you have also got your sort of human need for companionship and maybe you haven't yet brought those things together, so if you have a devotion or a commitment to an ideal, and also you've got this need for friendship, well, you have to, as it were, select your friends in such a way that they are going to help you realise your ideal and not draw you away from it. I mean you are not so strong, so committed to the ideal that friends can't do anything to you to draw you away from it. The other person that you may select as a good friend may well be in the same position.

Sridevi: But if somebody needs your friendship and they are still into quite worldly activities, I think that's where, as you say, it's difficult to decide 'do I need?'

S: Yes, well, put it this way I mean you've only got a limited amount of time and energy and if you are going to have a choice between friends who are committed to the same spiritual ideal as you are, and friends who are not committed to that ideal, well, you'd be foolish not to chose those friends who were committed to the same ideal.

Sridevi: But isn't there some risk also for them if they chose you, if they feel they need you?

S: Well, friendship has to be mutual. Though you can't insist on being someone's friend and they can't insist on your being their friend; it has to be mutual. If you feel strong enough to help others, well, fair enough, but I think you will only feel strong enough to help others if you've got spiritual friends yourself, either on the horizontal or vertical or both. But if you, as a relative beginner, without spiritual friends, are trying to be a friend to people who don't have any spiritual ideal, you might just get yourself into difficulties. (Pause)

Are there any further points on that, anyone got any reservations?

Vidyasri: I can't honestly help thinking that sometimes one has friends and they might be sort of

spiritual friends, but maybe you also have weaknesses in common, that therefore it means that you've got a weakness for whatever, going down the pub or something, so you occasionally do do that, but at the same time they are a good friend and ...

S: You are talking of a spiritual friend?

Vidyasri: Yes, and you are both meditating and to some extent committed.

S: Well, I think one can take it for granted, that for quite a long time you are both going to have lots of weaknesses, and some of them in common. (Laughter) One just has to make sure that it really is the common spiritual element which is central to the friendship, one has to be sure about that, and that that does preponderate and that that is really the decisive factor. (Pause)

Are there any more points from Anoma's group?

Vidyasri: There was one sort of whole area further on, actually, in section 8, which was on the seven (*sadhammas?*), and there were quite a few points () I wouldn't mind hearing you talk on but the one I was particularly sort of interested in was the point of 'possess much learning'.

S: Ah. The word would be '*bahusutta*' which means 'having heard much'. I think the implication here would be that one has heard much of the Dharma, not learning in a general sense. [Laughter]

Sanghadevi: I've just misguided quite a few people, because I found that reference in the *Mangala Sutta* '*bahusutta*' and in that context it seemed more like....

S: Like general knowledge. Here of course the context is definitely, so to speak, monastic, and the Buddha is talking about bhikkhus; for instance Ananda is said to have been the one who was most '*bahusutta*' who had heard most, because he heard so much of the Buddha's teaching, so I think that here one can take it in the sense of 'having a good knowledge of the Dharma'. On the other hand, in the Mahayana especially, it is stressed that it is useful, even from the spiritual point of view, to have a wide general knowledge and an acquaintance with arts and sciences and culture generally as a means of access and communication with other human beings - so that also mustn't be lost sight of. I think certainly the emphasis should be on a knowledge of the Dharma, but that doesn't necessarily exclude other things; knowledge of the Dharma need not be taken in a very narrow or literal sense; it doesn't necessarily mean simply learning Pali texts. What is the Dharma after all? You may find at least something of the Dharma, echoes or reflections of the Dharma in say Shelley or in Keats or in Shakespeare, an act, an appropriate quotation from one of those sources may set someone on the right path from a Dharmic point of view.

Sanghadevi: Is it correct that '*bahusacha*'

S: '*bahusutta*'

Sanghadevi: Ah it's not '*sacha*'

S: No, '*bahusutta*'; '*sutta*' being 'what is heard' or hearing.

Sanghadevi: Because I found this Nanamoli's the Buddhist dictionary - in that it had '*bahusacha*'

S: '*bahusacha*'? Well, that sounds like a misprint - '*bahusacha*' let me have a look at that. I think

actually The Buddhist dictionary is not here at the moment, it's gone to Tuscany.

_____ : Oh that was it, because I wondered sort of how, quite how that fitted in if looking at it as 'culture', cultural knowledge, that I sort of felt well, is that actually, do you really need that to practice the Dharma because surely some people can practice the Dharma...

S: Ah, it's the question of practising the Dharma and communicating the Dharma. I mean there is a saying of an Indian, a modern Indian teacher, as I have sometimes mentioned in this connection, he said that if you want to fight an army you need a whole armoury of weapons but if you want to commit suicide a pin is sufficient, so in the same way if you want simply to practice religion, practice the spiritual path, a single mantra will suffice, but if you want to convert hundreds and thousands of people you need to know all the scriptures. You see what I mean? It's rather like that; just for your own practice, very often, very little will suffice, but if you are going to be taking study groups and giving talks, you need to know very much more, to learn very much more thoroughly. When it comes to that, just the knowledge of the mindfulness of breathing and the metta bhavana won't be enough, however much it may suffice, or however much those things may suffice for your personal spiritual practice.

This is why a knowledge of the Arts and the Sciences is emphasised in the case of the bodhisattva, because that sort of knowledge is more appropriate to that sort of ideal. Here in the Pali text it's more, so to speak, the arahant ideal that is emphasised and therefore a strict knowledge of the Dharma is emphasised more.

Anoma: I came back to, well these are still conditions for...

S: The stability of the

Anoma: of the order, it's prosperity rather than its decay; it's a bit more general but I wondered how much these things specifically are related to that or...

S: Yes, well, one can say that certainly a knowledge of the Dharma, a good knowledge of the Dharma, on the part of the members of the spiritual community, will greatly contribute to the stability of the spiritual community, one can certainly say that; and here it's the Dharma in the, so to speak, narrower sense that is meant; but again one could say that if the members of the spiritual community have a good knowledge of Arts and Sciences and culture, that may be of assistance to them in attracting new members of the spiritual community and that could be a source of stability too.

Vidyasri: At an Order meeting recently in East London, we seemed to get into an incredibly long discussion-stroke-argument about this because it seems that some people felt that we should at classes and talks and so on, we should just have pure Dharma, straight Dharma, and they seemed to be saying that this was what you'd been saying recently, that not to bring in too many other things and I felt, well it seems slightly unclear because I remember a few years ago you were saying beware the premature synthesis, of sort of keeping in touch with your links and associations with the Arts and Music and so on, because may be you could use it in communicating the Dharma.

S: Well, no, what I was talking about was something different. As far as I remember we were discussing Dharma study groups, and what I was saying was that the Dharma study group needs to be a Dharma study group, and that people shouldn't be allowed to wander off just into sort of bypaths, and so that the Dharma study group or what is supposed to be a Dharma study group just becomes a general sort of discussion or even rapping session, this is what I was saying. Do you see what I mean? Because quite a number of the mitras with whom I came in contact down in London,

made the point that they wanted more Dharma, as it were, they said. On several of my recent visits I found them to demand, from mitras especially, more Dharma and more contact with order members, so it was in that context that I made these comments; that in the study groups it should be, especially when it's a Dharma study dat, it is the Dharma that should be emphasised and understanding the Dharma through the medium of that particular text, and discussion shouldn't wander off into all sorts of bypaths which have got no direct bearing, or even no indirect bearing on that particular text and its subject matter. This is what I was saying.

Vidyasri: But if an Order member had a strong feeling for Shelley or something, you wouldn't object to them using that in a talk or...

S: Well if they used it and didn't sort of diverge. For instance supposing we were supposed to be say studying the Four Noble Truths but somehow the name of Shelley came up and then whoever was leading it or somebody else in the group started rapping about Shelley and about 'Queen Mab' and about 'Prometheus Unbound', even if they did it well that would be out of place on that occasion, if not directly related to the subject matter of the text. If on the other hand they started talking about their holiday in Greece and you got into a bit of a rap about that, well that would be wandering from the point to an even greater extent and I have got the impression from some of the comments I heard that this sort of thing quite often happens.

Vidyasri: Yes.

S: And that sometimes the poor dried up order member who is leading the study group is only too glad to let it happen, because it sort of lets him or her off the hook, and that maybe the inadequacies of their knowledge won't be exposed. *[Laughter]* That was told to me by some mitras you see. *[Laughter]* But a Dharma Study group should be a Dharma Study group, yes, to elucidate the Dharma, you can bring in any material you like.

Vidyasri: But as a talk, I mean a talk is different if you sort of, you could even talk all your talk on Shelley.

S: Yes.

Vidyasri: But then would you see that as an inappropriate thing at a Centre?

S: I say it would depend on how it was treated. I mean if one pointed out or dealt with say the subject of Shelley, Shelley's poetry, in such a way that certain themes of general as it were Buddhistic interest were illuminated, then I would say it wouldn't be out of place, but even so, such lectures of that sort shouldn't crowd out say specifically Dharmic lectures. It's a question of emphasis; proportion. If you had only lectures on Keats, Blake, Shelley whoever, and there wasn't ever a lecture on the Dharma itself, on the Buddhist Sutras, well then that would be inappropriate, because it's the Dharma in the narrower sense, so to speak, the more traditional sense, that enables us to make sense, really, of Shelley and Blake and so on. (Pause) But they should be more illustrative. They shouldn't become ends in themselves.

Sanghadevi: Would you say that we do need a certain level of culture before you are able to practice the Dharma?

S: Not after my experience in India. No I say not. If you mean by that 'literary culture'.

Sanghadevi: No, no, I thought, I mean in this context in the *Mangala*

Sutta... well like in some Buddhist texts it talks about barbarians, and that it would be a disadvantage to be born a barbarian in terms of practising the Dharma and then there was this discussion about, well if you were a barbarian, that would imply you weren't, well, in a sense, you didn't have access to culture, I mean not in.....

S: Well I don't, I mean, I rather wonder about this. I say sometimes it is very difficult to communicate the Dharma to over-cultured people, it's no less difficult - it's as though well if you've got some degree of genuine culture, yes, I think communication of the Dharma becomes easier, but I think if you've got too little culture and also too much, so to speak, then communication of the Dharma becomes more difficult. Of course, when I say too much culture I mean, well, your misuse of culture perhaps then, it's become an end in itself, then you take Buddhism itself or the Dharma itself just as another form of cultural entertainment, you can't take it seriously, you are so used to ideas that come from various sources that you (unclear).

I would be very reluctant to say that there are certain people to whom you couldn't put the Dharma across just because they were, as it were, uncultured. I think it's possible to find people who are uncultured, not out and out barbarians, as it were, but people who are not cultured, certainly not very much literary culture or much refinement, but to whom you can put the Dharma across, and I've found this with people in India.

Sanghadevi: Then why is it regarded as being a disadvantage to be born a barbarian?

S: Well barbarians in the sense of people with say crude beliefs and customs, maybe immersed in bloodshed and animal sacrifice, very crude in their social life and so on. You see what I mean? 'Barbarians' in that sort of sense, given to violence, given to untruthfulness. It would be difficult to communicate the Dharma to such people. By uncultured people nowadays we usually mean those without a sort of superficial veneer or gloss, but certainly you can communicate the Dharma to such people. I don't think we have any real barbarians around these days unless perhaps it's football hooligans. I think you could even communicate the Dharma to a football hooligan provided that you got him on his own, get him away from his mates, but if there is a hundred of them, well, it's not easy to communicate the Dharma to him then. It's not easy to communicate the Dharma to a classroom full of children, I mean they are little barbarians very often (unclear) but if you've got them on their own, just one or two at a time well then you might be able to put across quite a lot. (Pause)

Sridevi: In this connection it came up in our group about how important it is to know what's going on in the world, about reading newspapers to be able to communicate to maybe over cultured people.

S: Well is reading the newspapers today knowing what's really going on in the world?

Sridevi: It may help...

S: It might help, yes. It would help you in knowing what some people thought was going on in the world, which is also part of what is going on in the world, because what people think about what is going on in the world is part of what is going on in the world, if you see what I mean! (Laughter) But I really wonder about this. I really wonder. I mean within the context of the FWBO I think it's helpful if a few people know about these things (laughter) as best they can, but for the majority who are just beginning to get into the spiritual life, to experience the spiritual community, I think they can well forget about newspapers, at least for a few years until they become chairmen of Centres.

Trisha: It's just that it's practical like knowing when there is a rail strike or a bus strike. (Laughter)

S: Well, you'll find out sooner or later, if you need to know. There was one of our Friends who'd heard there was a rail strike on and they walked all the way across London because the tube was also involved and only when he reached his destination he found that it was all over. (Laughter) He hadn't heard the news that it was over, he only heard the news that it was on. (Laughter) But I remember in Tuscany last year on the ordination course, one of the greatest pleasures of Tuscany, one of the greatest pleasures of that course in Tuscany, was the fact that I didn't see any newspapers or listen to the radio for 3 months, because I usually do read the newspaper out of a sort of sense of duty. I really wonder how much longer I will be able to go on doing that. It doesn't seem to leave me any wiser even about world affairs. But I really enjoyed not having to do that. It was quite a pleasure not having to occupy (). But yes there is certain things that as a movement we need to know about and some people in the movement therefore need to know about. You have to keep yourself well posted about new tax laws or provisions governing charities and things like that. We can't help that.

Liz: It's just that well I've spent quite a lot of my life not really knowing what's going on in the world and then, it's just recently I've found that perhaps knowing a little about something that where some of the troubles are in the world, has actually helped me develop a sense of metta. I mean I think I shall actually stop reading newspapers when I felt I couldn't cope with it, but it has actually helped me be more aware in some way, but it is difficult to know, because once you start learning about what's going on, there is always more and more in a sense to know. (Pause)

S: Or if one reads for instance newspapers too much, you can get overwhelmed by it all. There is so much that is going on in the world of a not very positive character. (Pause) But perhaps it isn't a bad thing sometimes to read about foreign countries in a general sense, not so much what is going on there just at present, especially politically, but what those foreign countries are like, what the people there are like, then you broaden your (unclear) Maybe you can prepare in advance for the time when you will be going there, starting a centre there.

Sanghadevi: With these different lists that the Buddha's, well, that are gathered together here, I mean is there any underlying significance in why particular combinations of mental states are brought together, I mean like in this, this series in number 8, I mean why that particular combination, and why

S: It's difficult to say why really, except that these are all quite important qualities. Confidence, confidence in the sense of 'sradha', faith. Faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Shame at wrong doing; and fear of wrong doing. These presumably are the famous *hiri-ottapa* about which we learnt in 'Mind in Buddhist Psychology', and then much knowledge of the Dharma, energy, mindfulness, wisdom, they seem to be sort of miscellaneous spiritual qualities, all of them of great importance.

Sanghadevi: Again they're not meant to be a progressive series?

S: No, they do not seem to be a progressive series, (pause), though one could regard them as a series. You start off with faith and confidence; on account of that you practise '*sila*' or ethics, which involves feeling shame of wrongdoing and fear of wrongdoing; and then you deepen your understanding of the Dharma, you put your energy into it, you become mindful, you develop wisdom. It could be regarded as progressive and cumulative in a broad general sort of way. The seven '*bodhiangas*' are of course definitely cumulative. They follow - we'll probably have to study those tomorrow.

But when I say that the spiritual life itself, or the process of individual development itself, is so rich and so many-sided, it's very difficult to reduce it to the development of one particular set of qualities, or to the practise of one particular series of steps or stages. Certain qualities are rather more relevant at one time, certain qualities at another and so on.

Viv: Could you just clarify a bit about the 'shame' and 'fear of wrongdoing'. We felt that we knew really what it was but couldn't articulate it.

S: 'Shame' is connected with one's feeling for one's spiritual friends, because you know that your spiritual friends wish you well, you know that they want the best for you, and your knowledge of how they will feel if you perform some unskilful action is a factor in preventing you from performing that unskilful action, and that is what is meant by 'shame'.

Sanghadevi: Is that the equivalent of 'fear of blame' - the *ottapa*?

S: No, this is '*hiri*', 'blame' is 'self-blame'; '*ottapa*' is sort of a burning within oneself - it's something like conscience, it's going against your own feeling, of your own inner feeling of what is right, whereas '*hiri*' is more the reluctance to go against what other people feel, your spiritual friends feel, is right.

Sanghadevi: In that *Mitrata* on the Eleven Positive Mental Events, I thought '*hiri*' was more the self-respect and '*ottapa*' was the fear of blame.

S: No, it's the other way round, because '*ottapa*' literally means burning, it's the way your own mind burns when you are conscious that you've done something which is not in accordance with your own ideals, whereas '*hiri*' is the shame that you feel when you become conscious that you've done something of which your spiritual friends would disapprove. It doesn't matter so much whether you get the right Pali words in the right psychological sense, but you must understand the distinction between the two psychological states themselves. In English you could call either of them 'shame' or 'blame'; because you could have 'selfblame' and you could have 'blame by others'; you could be ashamed of what you've done because you know it's wrong; you could be ashamed of what you've done because you know your spiritual friends think it's wrong. The English words aren't as differentiated in this respect as the Pali words '*hiri*' and '*ottapa*'. (Pause) But it's important you understand the distinction between these two experiences. I mean sometimes you can do something unskilful and you know you've done something wrong and you blame yourself, you've fallen short of your own ideals, but on another occasion, you can do something wrong, something unskilful, and then it's pointed out to you by your spiritual friends: 'look this wasn't very skilful', and you feel ashamed because you've let them down; you haven't lined up to their - not exactly their ideal of you but to what they have a right to expect from you. It's not any question of the group imposing its ideals on you, the group member. You see the distinction. Perhaps it's quite difficult for us to see the nature of the distinction.

_____ : Does this imply an initial unawareness of the fact that you've fallen short?

S: Well, yes, it may be that your spiritual friends have to point out to you what you've done, and you then see it, you say 'good heavens what have I done?', and you feel quite ashamed you've let them down, you've let yourself down (pause) - and of course spiritual friends will point these sort of things out in a very positive way. Yes, they blame you, they say 'yes, you've done wrong', but there is no question of withdrawal of metta, they don't try to make you feel guilty in the ordinary sense, in the neurotic sense, but they do try to make you see that you've done something unskilful.

_____ : We had a bit of a discussion in our group about the use of the word 'fear'. Well 'fear' can be seen as being a negative state of mind; actually here it's regarded as being positive.

S: Well there is a saying the burnt child fears the fire, well that's a rational fear because the burnt child knows that fire burns, and it hurts, so a fear of wrongdoing is a rational fear, because wrongdoing will result, will lead you into, disagreeable consequences. So that is a u motive. It's not sufficient () a positive aspiration after what is good, but in the early stages of one's spiritual life, it may be simply, or mainly, the fear and the consequences of wrongdoing that restrains you. I mean for instance if you are tempted by that second or third or fourth cream bun, well then you reflect on what the consequences might be tomorrow morning, you might wake up with a stomach ache, so you refrain (pause). I mean in Tibetan Buddhism especially, the contemplation of the possible painful consequences of unskillful action is regarded as a very powerful moral incentive.

Vidyasri: It seems in study groups when this has come up that I've been in recently, where it gets confused with guilt and people's Christian conditioning. That's why I think a lot of people shy away from the use of fear of wrong-doing because it seems to indicate authority and guilt.

S: Well, it's fear of the possible consequences of your own action, not fear of what somebody will do to you if you do something that you want to do. You don't want to perform an action which results in certain consequences of that kind, you don't want to, so if on reflection you decide well, this particular action will lead to such consequences, then you don't want to perform that action, because you don't want to experience those consequences out of fear in that sense. You have fear of consequences, you don't want to do anything that's going to be harmful for you in the long run, or harmful to you in the long run. (Pause)

For instance when you are cooking, and you are going to put something in the oven you go about it in such a way that you don't burn yourself, you could say you are afraid of being burned but it's not that your mind is consumed by the fear of being burnt, you are just careful to see that you are not burned, do you see what I mean? So in the same way with one's actions, you are just careful to see that you don't get into trouble - karmically speaking. It's just common sense. (Long pause.)

There seem to be all sorts of words which are rather loaded words for us because they come to us with all sorts of associations derived from their, for us, original Christian context. Words like 'guilt', 'fear', 'repentance' ...

Trisha: evil companions.

S: Evil companions. Even words like 'love'. It's very difficult for us to use them in a fresh sort of Buddhist sense. (Long pause.)

Who is from the other group? Have we come to that yet?

Sanghadevi: We did have quite a long discussion - again it was to do with 'indulging in society', yes, to not become attached to 'indulging in society' and I ...

S: Where is this?

Sanghadevi: That's in Section 7, and I remembered that you talked about the three different ways in which you can be with people from a neurotic need, from a healthy human need, and from a spiritual need.

S: Yes.

Sanghadevi: And then Bodhisri raised the point of how much was physical need on like an animal level, for food and clothing etc., how much was that catered for in that sort of classification.

S: Which one was what classification?

Sanghadevi: The question of where do you draw the line between a neurotic and a healthy need for food or clothing or I suppose shelter. The reasons for being with people.

S: Well you draw the line according to the effect upon you. For instance take this question of "do not become attached to or indulge in society". By 'society' I assume here is meant group activities as such, so the criterion of whether you are attached or are indulging is that you lose your sense of individuality, you are just immersed in the group, you lose your mindfulness and you come to yourself, so to speak, only some time later, and then you realise what has happened. It is possible to engage in society, in group activities, without loss of mindfulness or without loss of sense of one's own individuality, but it's quite difficult, and probably one would be well advised not to enter into such situations before your sense of individuality was firmly established.

Anoma: It seems it brought to my mind the question of Co-ops, I mean for example they aren't based in the outside co-op movement; there are quite a few meetings and get togethers and things, which some people from our Co-op feel a need to attend because they think it would be helpful in a way in practical matters, but on the other hand I always feel a bit reluctant about people going to those things because it's got so many (different views?) with what we're doing.

S: Because their co-ops are so different. I would suggest that if people do go to those things from the FWBO, they should stick together as a separate little group within that meeting. For instance in the morning make a point of having a meditation together. Do you see what I mean? So that they do preserve, to some extent, their sense of individuality. Otherwise it's very easy to get carried away in a purely social sort of sense and just lose all ()

Anoma: Yes it sometimes seems to be the sort of people who I think might do that, that kind of want to go (**S:** Ah...), and yet at the same time you can see there is a genuine side of it as well of wanting to improve their knowledge of structures of business and things ...

S: Well you just have to thrash out these things beforehand in your own co-op meetings, and even if necessary make the point, well such and such a person shouldn't go because they are more likely to be carried away by these sort of things. It should be some more mature or developed person that goes. It's up to who is available. Do you see what I mean?

Judy: What came out of the discussion we were having on being dependent on society and Bodhisri's remark about an animal needs food, clothing, shelter, was that our emotional needs are tied, linked very closely with our physical needs, and that nowadays because our physical needs are provided almost from a mutual area of people, that we are left with our emotional needs unanswered most of the time and they sometimes feel quite neurotic therefore, because you just don't know where or how to get them answered. Would you agree with that, that there is an emotional need?

S: I think this may well be the case in societies outside the FWBO, but I don't see how it can be the case within the FWBO or within the spiritual community, because when you are in contact with the spiritual community you are in contact with other people, so even though the spiritual community is a spiritual community, within the spiritual community you can also satisfy group needs. The group

needs are as it were subdued within the spiritual community. It's not as though you have your spiritual relations, your spiritual contact and communication, but you need in addition to that a separate group communication just within a group. No. Because at a certain level the spiritual community is a positive group, it doesn't exclude that, it includes that, it subsumes that. You see what I mean? After all, when you are having spiritual contact with people, you are also having emotional contact with them, aren't you? (Voices in agreement.) When you are having spiritual communication, it's emotional communication, or rather is there not an emotional element in that spiritual communication so that your emotional needs do not need to be separately met outside the spiritual community, do you see what I am getting at?

For instance, supposing you are away on retreat and it's a really good retreat with lots of meditation and so on, well would it be a very understandable situation if someone said 'well, I am enjoying this retreat immensely but my emotional needs are not being met'? If it was a genuinely spiritual retreat or spiritual occasion or spiritual community would one's emotional needs not be met? Certainly one's positive emotional needs, not one's neurotic emotional needs.

Judy: That's it really. Because a lot of the needs feel so neurotic and I'm not sure why we seem to have a lot of problems on a psychological level these days.

S: Yes, we do, don't we! *[Laughter]* I was saying that within the context of the spiritual community or within the context of the FWBO, broadly speaking, if your spiritual needs are being genuinely met, there are no emotional needs sort of left over needing separate independent emotional satisfaction.

Vidyasri: But I suppose what Judy is meaning is, was, I mean it might not be, but what do you do with your neurotic emotions? *[Laughter]*

S: I can tell you - get rid of them as quickly as possible! (More laughter.) What you shouldn't do is to satisfy them. *[Laughter]*

Judy: I suppose out of that discussion what I was feeling was that because we don't have to work at providing ourselves with these basic physical needs, that often again those emotional needs which are closely linked are also not - we don't work together to provide them, so that it gets more and more complicated and somehow then becomes neurotic.

S: I am not quite sure that I follow the reasoning, but nonetheless I make this general point, that if one is living, if one is functioning within broadly speaking, the spiritual community, well within the spiritual community one's emotional needs are met. One doesn't have separate emotional needs.

Sridevi: It seems to me that physical, animal needs sometimes get a bit too little attention. I think there needs to be a balance with physical activity and meditation, and things like that.

S: Well retreats are obviously of different kinds. I remember quite recently we have had here some karate retreats and some of the people on those karate retreats have said that their meditation was much better on the karate retreat than on other retreats, quite noticeably so, they said they found - a little to their surprise, in some cases - that karate and meditation went very well together, because they said when they sat for meditation, after their karate, their physical energies had been sort of used up or satisfied and they didn't feel any need to move, they just sat there completely solidly and were so sort of satisfied with their physical movement and exertion that they'd had that there was no mental activity and they could get easily into meditation, more easily than usual.

Liz: Can I just ask if you're leading a spiritual life but intellectually you know what you have to do,

emotionally you are still quite behind...

S: Yes.

Liz: And, so, you do get this thing where you are leading the spiritual life but some of your emotional needs aren't quite being met say, or you think they are not, I have found it quite difficult to know how to actually divert them back into the spiritual life. It seems like...

S: In a way approaching it from the angle I've been approaching it this last few minutes, it's not so much a question of sort of diverting one's emotions, let's say, into the spiritual life, but of deepening one's spiritual life in such a way that the emotional energies naturally flow into it. Do you see what I mean? If you are on retreat for instance, well get as much into meditation, get as much into communication, as you possibly can. I think you will then find that more and more of your emotional energies are flowing into that retreat situation.

Liz: It's more like doing more and more of that of what you know you need to do.

S: Putting yourself more and more into that particular activity, that particular situation, and in a sense here making a channel for your emotions, where you are carrying your emotions along with you in that way, rather than trying to provide a separate sort of little outlet or inlet, as the case may be, for them, within that particular situation.

Anoma: Something came up in our group, connected with that - I can't remember how it came up - but if something you discover that for you truly engages your emotions and it does feel skilful, even if nobody else is doing it, well you can ask people if they think it's skilful as well, but you should not just think well nobody else is doing it so therefore it can't be spiritual.

S: Well no. Otherwise that would make things very difficult in all sorts of ways because you know originally you might have started meditating alone. Well, someone mentioned - was it anyone in this group or in the other group about dancing? - no it was the other group. There are kinds of dancing which put you in emotionally positive moods, fair enough.

Vidyasri: Right, that's what I was going to say as well in line with what Ros said that I suppose you could try other things like besides just doing Pujas and putting yourself more wholeheartedly into them, which you can do, you could also try and do something else that could be creative that touches your emotions.

S: I am not suggesting that the existing retreat programme is to be considered absolutely immutable. Because I mean originally at the very beginning we didn't have communication exercises as part of the retreat programme. They were introduced subsequently with very positive effects. So there is a possibility of some other activities being introduced into the retreat programme, in the same way if sufficient people find them of benefit. (Pause) I think there has to be a bit of room for experimentation. We certainly mustn't regard the FWBO and the way it does things as sort of fixed and final, and settled for all time after 15 years, that certainly isn't the case. It needs perhaps a lot more experimentation and finding out about different things, different activities that () different kinds of people, especially as people of more and more different kinds of (?)

Anoma: It seems to take a while to get away from the idea of things being strictly spiritual or not spiritual.

S: Yes, it depends mainly on their effect upon us and there are certain things which are almost universally beneficial like meditation. There are other things that might be beneficial just to a few

people, but they can't be excluded, though they won't have a prominent place. On the other hand times may change, one may find that certain things that only a few people are interested in now or that help only a few people, after a few years time they interest a lot of people and help them out, depending on who comes along to us.

Anoma: I feel we got quite a bit of this this morning as well, that the question of solitary retreats, of spending time on your own is very important in connection with this engaging your deeper emotions so that you are very in touch with your deeper self, and if there are any bits kind of lurking around outside that aren't involved, and I found that really helpful.

S: You should know your total self, be able to take it all in at one glance as it were. Very often on solitary retreat very neglected parts of yourself surface.

Anoma: And you can sometimes see then more what to do with them but if you are not even sure what they are ...

S: Yes, very often they are emotional needs which are not sort of consciously recognised and manifest themselves in the form of moods, which you can't explain, which you can't account for. You may be in a beautiful retreat situation but some strange mood comes over you that's quite inappropriate, you don't know why. Well presumably it comes from some part of you, some emotional part, perhaps, that is not being satisfied. Some people may go on solitary retreat and have all sorts of strange moods, some of them weep and cry and feel very lonely and deserted, they don't have a friend in the world, even though they know they've got lots of friends, but there is that feeling there, presumably left over from the past which they have to take into account.

Liz: What do you do with them? What do you do?

S: Well you must first just recognise them. Just look at them and I think if you look at them and consider your general situation, after a while you will see what to do with them. Some people encounter feelings of rage and resentment. Sometimes you will be able to see how these feelings have arisen and sometimes when you are able to see that well they begin to subside. You can perhaps see in some cases just how silly the whole business is.

On solitary retreat you may become conscious of something you've always wanted to do, but you have never been able to do it, you have never never allowed yourself to do it and you think I really must do this, I must satisfy this particular desire. It might be say, to learn a musical instrument, it might be to take up painting, but you come to realise I've always wanted to do this, and because that desire has not been fulfilled, it's getting in the way, or you may come to the conclusion, well it's just not possible to satisfy that desire, but I recognise it and I accept, with the whole of myself, that I am not going to be able to fulfil it at least for some years, so I accept the situation, I consciously renounce the fulfilment of that desire. [Pause]

Sanghadevi: When it refers to wisdom I took that to be '*prajna*'.

S: Yes. '*Prajna*' in which sense?

Sanghadevi: Well in a sense of not of just a flash of insight but a consistent flow of transcendental and spiritual...

S: Yes, because "much learning", if one takes that in a sense of Dharmic learning, knowledge of the Dharma, well that covers the *Suttamaya Prajna* in the same *sutta* - perhaps it even includes '*Cintamaya Prajna*' so that would leave great wisdom as meaning '*Bhavanamaya prajna*', wisdom

which arises out of insight through meditation. (Pause.)

_____ : We did sort of talk a bit about the one in number seven 'do not take pleasure in or share in idle talking' and Anoma pointed out that speech is a really important area in Buddhism. There are four speech precepts when you are ordained. Yes, it just seemed quite an important area, speech.

S: I think it is often a neglected area, because after all we hardly stop talking when we are awake more often than not, so we tend not to exercise too much control over it. (Pause.)

_____ : I think that sometimes one can mistake openness with people with talking...

S: Yes.

_____ : That you've got to just keep talking with somebody to show that you are open to them.

S: Somebody came to see me - well a lady came to see me - some days ago, and I hadn't met her before and she had come to see me to ask me certain things and all that, and we were together for about an hour. I don't think she stopped talking for more than 5 seconds at a time, but she wasn't unaware of it because she sort of apologised for it at the very end, but she clearly couldn't stop herself talking. I must say she did talk quite interestingly (laughter) which was a small mercy (more laughter). But she didn't really stop talking.

Karola: Was it the first time she had seen you?

S: It was the first time she had seen me.

Sanghadevi: Nervousness>

Karola: Yes, I was just thinking that, I am sure. (Laughter)

Anoma: Sometimes there is a sort of momentum, I mean, if you get into talking...

S: Yes, well, she did talk to me about quite interesting things, I was quite happy to hear them but nonetheless there wasn't any communication in the sense of exchange, even though what she had to say was interesting.

Anoma: I know after solitary retreats, every time I say I am not going to do it, but I seem to do it every time. I come back and I don't feel like talking. The first people I meet I hardly say anything, I almost, it's quite difficult to speak, but once I actually say more than a few sentences, I find it really difficult to stop. (Laughter) and sort of two hours later I think 'oh, I've done it again'!

_____ : I find sometimes that it's a lot easier to talk about something than to actually just experience it, so I talk a lot to save myself from having to experience it.

S: So 'idle talking'. Did you sort this out, what was meant by 'idle talking'?

_____ : Not really.

Anoma: Well just passing time as gossiping, something that wasn't conducive to your development.

S: Yes, yes.

Sanghadevi: Frittering your energy.

S: I think this is very often a sign that one has just been engaged in idle talk, that one feels at the end of a session of such idle talk, exhausted rather than refreshed, whereas if there has been a genuine communication, you feel refreshed, you feel your energy is enhanced, you don't feel drained.

_____: That's true. (Pause.) You have to be able to feel happy with yourself to not have to talk.

S: Yes.

_____: You know, to be able to just sit and be with people and not necessarily talk to them

S: They have to be happy with you otherwise they will just start talking in the same way.

_____: Yes.

Sridevi: Could you say a bit about not stopping at incidental achievement, passing attainment, but ...

S: Where is that?

Sridevi: It's under seven, the last point under seven.

S: Ah. Well the Buddhist spiritual path, as you all know, is a progressive path. You go from stage to stage, step by step, but there is always the temptation to just settle down somewhere, just to say to yourself, well this is it, I am not going to go any further, this is the sort of gravitational pull of the conditioned, the sort of inertia, sort of laziness. So at every step, at every stage, there is a temptation to think or to feel, I'll stop here! the temptation to rest on one's laurels, so one's always got to be thinking in terms of keeping going. Otherwise you settle down with some lesser attainment which may not be as permanent, so you may start going back. If you settle down in being a Stream Entrant, well, that's not so bad, but if you settle down as being healthy, happy and human, well, maybe before long you won't be even healthy, happy and human, you will just sink back.

Anoma: I was just thinking that occasionally when I realise that, well I just came up against that I didn't want to change any further. It wasn't that I felt particularly happy but I just didn't want to change and somebody said to me 'Oh, well you've got to change, you've got a loud voice!' (laughter) You can get by, because I think I was saying that I didn't think anyone else had really noticed that I had come to that!

S: Well, for instance there is a danger someone might be aiming at ordination, well they get ordained but then they might feel, well, that's it, I've arrived, they might not be making such an effort as they were making before, they might think that being ordained is the sort of culmination of the spiritual life although if you asked them, they would not say that it was, but they may sort of adopt that sort of attitude in fact - well now they've arrived they can take things easy at least for a bit. (Pause.)

Anoma: I think in regard to that it's quite important for Order members - I mean if somebody has been getting a big push towards ordination, then they get ordained, and everybody says, right, they're ordained they can get on with it and that's quite tough, perhaps they had all the attention..

S: Quite a lot of this happened (unclear) recently (unclear) the importance of continuing kalyana mitrata after ordination, otherwise we help everybody very solicitously up to the edge of the pond or whatever and after they slide in leave them to their own resources (pause); go away looking for somebody else to push over (laughter). Well, this is what one sometimes sees happening.

Well how are we going for time by the way, my watch had stopped?

_____ : It's nearly quarter past one.

S: Well, just have the last question and we'd better stop.

Sanghadevi: I would like to know a bit more about the way these texts are compiled. You did say something yesterday about it, but I just find it, well a bit unsatisfactory the way - like it's one set of conditions after another and I was wondering well, was it at different times the Buddha gave these conditions or did he do it all at once after this particular incident with Ajatasatru or

S: We don't really know, but I think perhaps we can speculate. I think it's quite likely that most of these lists of conditions conducive to the stability of the Sangha were mentioned by the Buddha, but it is quite possible that somebody interpolated later from other sources no doubt teachings that the Buddha gave, actually gave, but not necessarily on that occasion. Perhaps we have no means of definitely knowing at this time, 2500 years later. Because for instance supposing the Buddha had just given three such sets of seven conditions, but supposing floating around in the oral tradition, there were various other sets of seven qualities, seven this, and seven that, relating to bhikkhus or sanghas or society, well there would be a temptation to include them also when the monks were reciting one day, well, one of them might think, there are those other conditions, what about those? the Buddha must have mentioned those also on that occasion, all right, let's include them. In that way they got included. This is probably the sort of way in which the whole Sutta grew and developed, and became bigger and bigger.

Sometimes, in the case of some texts we can see what has been added, but we can't always be sure. Sometimes what has been added really stands out like a patch put on a garment, because the language is rather different, the vocabulary is different, the ideas are different, you can see it belongs to a later period, but on the other hand some things seem to have been added very early on. So we have to use our discrimination. (Pause)

Any further and final points? (Pause) right let's leave it till tomorrow.

End of Tape Two

Tape three

Anoma: We were wondering if you might say a bit more about them.

S: All right. This is in a way quite a well worn topic that I've gone into on a number of different occasions, especially in study groups, but you might not have easy access to those tapes, so I'll just briefly recapitulate. '*Sutta Maya Panna*' - that's the Pali term - that means wisdom which arises upon hearing. We have to remember that in the Buddha's day there was no written literature. If you wanted to learn, if you wanted to study any subject you had to find a teacher; and you had literally

to listen to him, you had to listen to what he said. So '*sutta maya panna*' is the *panna* which comes from hearing, or if you like, from learning, or from study, or just reading. *Panna* is the wisdom, or if you like the understanding you get just by reading and study. You see what I mean? You know the subject, but in a sense you don't go very deeply into it, you are just receptive, you just take in, you have a grasp of the subject as we say, but that's all. But that is of course a first and necessary step.

Then '*Cinta maya panna*', is the wisdom that arises by way of thought, or by thinking. Now 'thought', or 'thinking' here means one's own independent, if you like even creative, reflection and thinking about what you have learned. This is the second step. This is the second stage and obviously this is very important. You hear something, you learn something, but then you turn it over in your mind; you reflect upon it; you try to make it your own; you have even original thoughts about it; original ideas about it; you start making your own contribution to it; your thinking becomes, as we say, more creative; this is '*cinta maya panna*'.

And then '*bhavana maya panna*' - '*bhavana*' means literally 'to make become'. It's a technical term for meditation, it's a technical term for higher states of consciousness, for the *dhyanas*. So '*bhavana maya panna*' is that wisdom which arises by way of a mind suffused by, transformed by, the experience of the *dhyanas*, in such a way that it becomes clearer and more penetrating and more able to develop insight. So the wisdom that arises by way of meditation is insight itself. This is transcendental wisdom, not wisdom in the mundane sense.

So therefore one progresses from '*sutta maya panna*' to '*cinta maya panna*' and from '*cinta maya panna*' to '*bhavana maya panna*'. You hear the Dhamma, you understand the Dhamma, you reflect upon it, you think about it, you make it your own, and then, with a mind suffused, as it were, by the *dhyana* experience, you actually penetrate the dharma intuitively and develop wisdom in the highest sense, transcendental wisdom. This is the as it were, step by step procedure.

Vidyasri: Is it actually progressive? Could you have '*bhavana maya panna*' without having heard the dharma from an external source? Could you have..

S: You could have, if you were like the Buddha himself.

Vidyasri: Yes.

S: But that would be very very rare, very unlikely. I mean for any of us that's impossible because we've already heard the Dharma, we've already started reflecting upon it. But yes, in the Buddha's case, he didn't hear - he says in fact, in one of his very early utterances 'in respect of things not heard before, things not seen before, wisdom arose, light arose.' In his case, it was something that he hadn't heard before, an independent discovery, but that is not the way it is for those following the Buddha's footsteps - they hear, then they reflect, and then they realise.

Sanghadevi: How much does this link up with the distinction between 'faith followers' and 'doctrine followers' - is it actually possible to gain insight without having much of an intellectual understanding of the Dharma? We had quite a discussion in our group about where the intellect comes in - do we need to involve that faculty, the rational faculty?

S: Yes. Well I think the discussion arises because of the way in which we split off intellect from the emotions. I have said even that faith is a form of understanding but it's not mediated by conceptual symbols. One could say that both the 'faith follower' and the 'doctrine follower' may hear the Dharma. In the Buddha's day they would have heard it from the Buddha, from a personal source. But the 'faith follower' directs his attention more to the speaker who embodies the Dharma in his life; the doctrine follower gives his attention more to the Dharma which is expressed, not so much

to the person giving expression to the Dharma, giving expression to the Truth. In our day of course you can learn about the Dharma without being in contact with the Buddha, so in our day it's much more easy to be a doctrine follower, and it's much more easy to find books than it is to find a teacher, so the doctrine follower has an easier time of it, and perhaps you can be a sort of pseudo-doctrine follower much more easily, but the faith follower needs to find a person for them to hear, with whom to interact.

Sanghadevi: Would you say that for most of us we - I mean we do actually have to engage our rational intellectual thinking faculty in order to really penetrate the Dharma. I mean, it's not enough just to meditate, we do have to study.

S: No, it's not enough just to meditate. One has to develop insight, and insight is usually mediated, or for most people seems to be mediated, by conceptual symbols. But let me give you an example. There is this question of insight into impermanence. Now this can be mediated by conceptual symbols; that is to say, you can develop insight by reflecting after meditation, on the formula such as 'all conditioned things are impermanent'. Here conceptual symbols, as I've called them, are brought into play, so you can develop insight in this way, by reflecting on that formula and thereby developing insight into the truths, or the reality, which that particular formula represents in the form of those conceptual symbols. On the other hand you can be meditating, and you may just see a leaf fall, and just seeing that leaf fall may mean the same thing in, as it were, symbolic terms - you may not give rise to an actual train of thought, but you see the leaf fall, and as you see that leaf fall, you see everything fall, but you don't think about it in a conceptual way. You see what I mean? You could say that the faith follower would be more likely to see things in that way, not conceptually mediated, but mediated by some sort of concrete image, whether a natural image or an archetypal image, or whatever. (Pause.)

Anoma: Somewhere I heard, I don't quite know where, that - I think somebody was reporting that perhaps you had said it - but in order for insight to arise you had to go through the four *dhyanas* and then make a conscious decision somewhere to return to the first *dhyana* where there is some mental activity going on, in order to allow the insight to arise - is that so?

S: This is the, so to speak, standard procedure. It's not quite so cut and dried as one might think. What is usually said, or is very often said, is that you have to sort of alternate between *dhyana* and what one might call, well, directed thinking, purposive thinking, because the *dhyana* sort of keeps the mind, keeps the consciousness, keeps the energies together; gives them a sort of more powerful thrust, but when you start thinking, when you start this purposive thinking, then of course you have more of a basis for the development of insight, but there is the danger that your thoughts may start wandering, so again you have to immerse yourself in *dhyana*. So very often, it is said that if you are practising quite intensely, say on a solitary retreat, well, you can spend say a half an hour or an hour or whatever seems an appropriate period meditating, getting as deeply into meditation as you can, then you, as it were, but it's only as it were, in a manner of speaking, you emerge from your meditation, in a sense you come down to a lower level, but in another sense you don't: you allow a train of reflection related to the Dharma, related to Truth, or reality, to start up. You try to penetrate, to understand things deeply with your concentrated mind, with all your energies. But if you find that your train of reflections is beginning to lead you astray, beginning to wander, you get a bit distracted, all right, you again plunge yourself into the meditation, into the *dhyana* states if you can. When you have spent sometime there, again you, so to speak, emerge; again you allow the train of reflection to start up; again you can start trying to penetrate that topic. You may be reflecting on impermanence or *annata*, or *sunyata*, or whatever it may be...

Karola: This us while you meditate, not in between meditations?

S: You can do it in between, but you may of course then lose much of your concentration, but you can do it in between. Monks very often do it in the East, this reflection and developing of insight, while walking up and down. (Pause) But you get the sort of basic pattern?

Sanghadevi: Somebody who is more of faith follower, what would they do? if they are not going to ...

S: Well they could visualise the Buddha or a bodhisattva - reflect upon... more deeply reflect upon their particular attributes, and be as it were, carried away by that.

_____ : In our group, when we were talking about mindfulness, we came across two different lists for the development of it. One of them was the 'Four Foundations of Mindfulness', and the other one was a progression you have given in 'From alienated awareness to integrated Awareness', and we were wondering what was the most useful.

S: It depends on circumstances; depends who you are, but basically they are all useful, because one needs to develop mindfulness, or awareness, in every possible way, in respect of every possible form of activity, in relation to every possible kind of object. Mindfulness, or awareness, is always useful, the Buddha says, you can't have too much of it, so develop it as much as you can, in every way that you can. It's not that one way is an alternative to another way. Get around to developing mindfulness in every possible way, sooner or later...

_____ : I got confused, I thought the 'Four Foundations of Mindfulness' were the progression starting with objects, then self, then others, then reality.

S: No, no!

_____ : Have they got a name, has that?

S: These are usually called the 'four dimensions of awareness'. The word 'dimensions' indicating that they don't constitute successive steps or stages. In 'the Four Foundations of Mindfulness', as described in the *Sutta*, you've got four successive steps or stages: beginning with awareness of the body and its movements, then feelings and emotions, then thoughts, and then dharmas in the sense of higher spiritual realities.

Sanghadevi: In the list of the *bodhiangas*, in the section on mindfulness where you've got: 'Mindfulness of the Dharmas' in the sense that you said, does that connect up with the next *bodhianga* - the search after Truth, where it also seems to be penetrating the dharmas?

S: Here there are several interpretations given. One that I personally favour is that which regards dharma in the term '*dharma vicaya*' as referring to mental states and not to 'dharmas' in the sense of teaching. You know the word '*dhamma*' or '*dharma*' has a number of different meanings, one of them is 'mental states', as in the first verse of the *Dhammapada: Manu* (Pali term) *Dhamma* - Mind is the first of mental states'. You see what I mean? So '*dhamma vicaya*' here, I think, means more 'investigation of mental states'. So the preceding awareness '*sati*' - refers more to awareness of one's mental state which of course can be preceded by awareness of the body and its movements. So you become aware of your mental state, or your mental states, and then you investigate them; you examine which are skilful and which are unskilful, and you gradually eliminate the unskilful. So I usually interpret '*dhamma vicaya*' here as meaning not investigation of the Dharma, in the sense of investigation of the doctrine, but investigation of one's own subjective mental states. The two are not of course mutually exclusive really.

_____ : Sorry, Bhante, are you translating 'the search after truth' as '*dhamma vicaya*'? What does '*dhamma vicaya*' translate?

S: I wouldn't translate it really as 'search after truth'; I would translate it as 'investigation of mental states'. Due to the elimination of the unskilful mental states and the augmentation of the skilful mental states, the energy arises, energy is released.

Vidyasri: Why is that? Because you've gone in the direction of the skilful mental states?

S: Yes. You are more integrated. There are more positive emotions.

But I am not saying that 'investigation of the Dharma', in the sense of 'investigation of the teaching', is to be excluded from the spiritual path as represented by the seven '*bodhiangas*', but it does seem to me, bearing in mind that mindfulness comes immediately before and energy immediately afterwards, that the *dhamma* in '*dhamma vicaya*', here, means 'mental states' rather than 'the Doctrine' or 'teaching'. Do you see the point?

Sanghadevi: Yes, I see that point, but I don't quite see where the - in the '*sati*', the level of 'awareness of *dharmas*'. Are you saying that you regard that as being 'awareness of mental states'?

S: Yes. That is to say whether in one's mind there is present *lobha*, *dvesa*, *moha* or not. And then one might say 'energy' in the sense of, well, applying oneself to the elimination of the unskilful and the cultivation of the skilful mental states. In that way, 'joy' (also is released). There's still something you're not quite happy with?

Sanghadevi: Yes. I can't see why the awareness of mental states wouldn't fall into the category of awareness of thoughts and awareness of feelings, and then awareness of dharmas would be something else.

S: One could say 'mindfulness' in as much as it comes right at the beginning here and it is used in various ways, is 'mindfulness' in a more simple and straightforward sense, that is to say just mindfulness of the body and its movements, maybe mindfulness of breathing and. so on.

If I had to choose between interpretations, I think the interpretation of '*dharma*' here as 'mental states' is more appropriate, though again, one can't exclude '*dharma*' in the sense of doctrine or teaching - it's not a question of having to choose between one or the other interpretations. (Pause) The whole context here seems to be psychological and experiential rather than doctrinal.

Sanghadevi: It's interesting because when we were studying it Bodhisri was feeling that it was a more doctrinal slant to it ...

Bodhisri: Or it is attracting intellectual people more.

S: Or it may be because things are spelled out quite clearly. (Pause.) Any further point? Are we still on nine and ten?

Sanghadevi: Nine and ten?

S: Yes, yes.

Sanghadevi: I mean, where it talks about concentration, one pointedness of mind, *Samadhi*, I wasn't sure how deep a level of *samadhi* that was referring to.

S: Where is this?

Sanghadevi: That's in nine, the seven *bodhiangas*, the sixth one, before you get to the community. Is it still mundane or has it got to the point of ...

S: Mm. That's quite interesting because there doesn't seem to be a distinction here between the mundane and the transcendental. I would say that this is because we have to take equanimity, *uppekkha*, in a much higher sense than it's usually taken: we have to take it as synonymous with *Nirvana*. It's what I have described somewhere - may be in *The Three Jewels* - as 'Transcendental Axiality'.

Anoma: It's in your lecture 'Mind Reactive and Creative'.

S: Ah! Because it's the equanimity which is absolutely basic, in which there's no alternation between any particular pairs of concepts: you are no longer taken in by a pair of opposites such as 'being' and 'non-being'; you've gone beyond 'being' and non-being'. That's why you have equanimity in the absolute sense. So to have equanimity in that sense, you want to have to develop insight fully, you have to be enlightened virtually. So I would say that the point of transition lies between the concentration and one pointedness of mind and equanimity. Equanimity here, is transcendental, not mundane. This is not actually said by traditional writers, it is implied if one regards the '*bodhiangas*' as a complete series; as a self-sufficient path. (Pause) After all they are '*bodhi-angas*' - they are '*angas*' of '*bodhi*'. (Pause.)

_____: What do you mean? I don't think I quite follow. What has to be developed between concentration and

S: That will be insight, because if one takes equanimity in the mundane sense as for instance in the context of the four *Brahma Viharas*, well, one has a series of positive but mundane *nidan*s so to speak, not culminating in the transcendental. So if it is to be a complete path, one has to have at least one turn, one *nidana* at the end of the series which stands for the transcendental. So we know from other sources it's not mindfulness, it's not search after truth, it's not energy, it's not the joy resulting from detachment, it's not serenity, it's not concentration and one-pointedness of mind, it can only be therefore equanimity! You see what I mean?

_____: It's a bit like a detective story! (Laughter)

S: And this equanimity is somewhat like what is called '*annuttarayogakhema*', which is a synonym for enlightenment and does suggest something more like equanimity. It is translated - '*yogakhema*' - as the 'unexcelled security'.

Vidyasri: I'd always thought - I've obviously got it wrong - that the *brahma viharas* were sort of transcendental emotions, I suppose partly because they are called '*brahma viharas*' and so I think of *brahma* as like '*brahmacarya*', sort of, the way of a holy man, and therefore the enlightened man, I thought, and also compassion I thought was something that only - pure compassion...

S: Well, '*brahma*' usually in the Pali texts has definitely a mundane connotation. '*Brahmacarya*' is the spiritual life rather than the transcendental life. This is the sort of consensus, so to speak, of the Pali Canon. But having said that one has also to say that though this is not the present day tradition, there are sort of hints in the Canon that sometimes the word '*brahma*' is used in a sense that almost suggests the transcendental, as it were to make it a bit more difficult. But the standard Theravada teaching is that the '*brahma viharas*' and '*brahmacarya*', these all indicate something mundane,

though on a higher more refined mundane plane, as we encounter in the *dhyanas* themselves. The *dhyanas* are mundane, the '*brahmalokas*' are mundane, the '*brahmas*' are mundane, according to Theravada tradition. But there is, as I said, nonetheless, in the Pali Canon, a hint or two that the Buddha, at least sometimes, used the word '*brahma*' to suggest something more, even to suggest something transcendental or *nirvanic*. So you weren't altogether wrong. (Laughter.) But if we stick to the standard Theravada teaching, as it has come down to us, then such terms as '*brahmacarya*', '*brahma-vihara*' indicate something mundane. Something 'spiritual' as I would say, as distinct from something transcendental. Something pertaining to the lower half of the spiral - this side of the Point of No Return, rather than to the other side of spiral or the other side of the Point of No Return.

_____ : As you talk about equanimity in the transcendental sense, I find it difficult to envisage any form of equanimity which isn't. [Laughter]

S: Well, it's really quite simple in a way. Mundane equanimity is equanimity that can be lost; transcendental equanimity is equanimity that can't be lost. And you do experience a degree of equanimity sometimes. I mean, there is this famous line in a poem by Pope where he says, referring to the lady of the house, '*and mistress of herself though China fall*'. () So that sort of equanimity can withstand any worldly shocks. But, well, no, it's not altogether any worldly shocks, not always, that equanimity can be disturbed, but the equanimity of a Buddha cannot be disturbed because it is based upon insight. I mean worldly equanimity is based upon self-control, but in the case of transcendental equanimity there is nothing to control any more. (Pause.)

Sanghadevi: What did you say again that '*annuttarayogakhema*' translated as?

S: The unexcelled security, it's usually translated. (Pause)

Vidyasri: Something else we tried to ... because we were getting slightly getting mixed up with these seven limbs, and then these things appearing in other lists, so there is the joy resulting from detachment, '*pritti*', and '*passadi*' being the same as in the twelve links, those three, and then somebody asked how they connected with the *dhyanas* because they sound quite similar to three of the *dhyanas*.

S: Yes, well one must understand that there are many different formulations of the path. Perhaps the Buddha deliberately presented the path in a number of different ways, so that one shouldn't be left with the impression that the path is something quite clear cut and straightforward consisting of this, that and the other, so many steps, so many stages. He viewed it from so many different points of view, looked at it from so many different points of view. And now at one time certain factors are emphasised, at other times certain other factors, which between them all this gives one the impression that the path is something quite rich and multi-dimensional.

So one gets the same terms occurring in slightly different senses in different contexts. For instance if you think of the Five Spiritual Faculties, mindfulness occurs there, faith occurs there, virya occurs there, *Prajna* occurs there. Think of the Noble Eightfold Path, you get *sammasati*, you get *samma ajiva* which doesn't come anywhere else. You also get *sammasamadhi*....

_____ : Which one is *samma ajiva*?

S: Right Livelihood. That doesn't come anywhere else, does it, but the Eightfold Path? So it's as though you have to add up all these different formulations together to be get a complete comprehensive picture. It isn't quite so neat and simple as one might think just looking at one particular formulation. You look at *Sila*, *Samadhi*, *Prajna*, that seems quite simple and

straightforward. The Eightfold Path, but then also we have to look the Seven *Bodhiangas* and the Five Spiritual Faculties, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. They are all different aspects, different dimensions, of one and the same spiritual path, which means, really, one and the same evolving and developing individual. It's difficult to describe the path because it's difficult to describe an individual, it's difficult to describe a developing individual. You can concentrate now on one aspect, now on another. It will give you a different picture each time.

Vidyasri: So with these would you say that those three - the joy resulting from detachment, serenity and concentration - were like *dhyanic* states. They are *dhyanic* states?

S: Yes they are *dhyanic* states one might say. I think by the time you've got up to that level you'd be experiencing *dhyanic* states. One might say that all intense, pure, skilful, positive emotions, are so to speak, *dhyanic*. *Metta* is *dhyanic*, *Karuna* is *dhyanic*, *Mudita* is *dhyanic*. *Saddha*, that is faith, is *dhyanic*. Depending on the degree of intensity with which it's experienced. [Long Pause]

_____ : In () I haven't often seen a combination of *anicca*, *anatta* and *asubha* together - I have seen *dukkha*.

S: Yes. I think I have to check that in case it was a misprint or something that has been left out. I hope we've got the *Digha Nikaya* here. Can someone just see? Is there Volume one of the *Digha Nikaya*, those red and white volumes, second shelf down, is there a *Digha Nikaya* there, volume one? 'Long Discourses of the Buddha'. It might have gone already to Tuscany. I might be able to find it in some other source. [pause to look for a text]

Yes it is *asubha*. So what is *asubha*? The translator is rather naughty in translating *asubha* as 'ill' which nearly always is used to translate *dukkha*. But *asubha* is a very important term. Very often you have the four terms of *dukkha*, *anicca*, *anatta* and *asubha*. I've dealt with these in *The Three Jewels*. You'll have to look it all up there, but this is a very important topic. *Subha* means both pure and also beautiful, so *asubha* means both impure and also ugly. So one can look at the transcendental say as being *subha* and the mundane as being *asubha*. Just as the mundane is *dukkha* and the transcendental is *sukkha*.

_____ : Do you think it appeals to a certain temperament to perhaps be () this particular kind of lecture. That maybe it would be an incentive to some people to see the world in terms of being ugly....

S: Well it's not so much seeing the world in terms of being ugly. The Buddha in fact says he doesn't see it in that way, because there is the episode of (Bhagava) I think it is who comes to the Buddha and says that he is supposed to teach that when one reaches up to a *vimoksa* called *subha* you see the whole world as ugly, and the Buddha says no, that when you reach up to that *vimoksa* called *subha* then you see beauty as it really is, which is rather a subtle difference. So one might say that this kind of approach appeals more to the - that is to say thinking in terms of *subha* and *asubha* - appeals more to the devotional, more to the aesthetic, or aesthetically oriented, kind of person. That is to say one thinks not so much in terms of degrees of reality or degrees of truth, but in terms of degrees of beauty. It's a rather Platonic or Neo-Platonic conception. You think of the transcendental as the most beautiful and you see the higher reaches of the mundane as being less beautiful and the lower reaches of the mundane as being even less beautiful than that. So there's a sort of hierarchy of levels of beauty, and you're trying to go from the lower levels to the higher levels all the time - to that which is more and more and more beautiful. Do you see what I mean? The *Dhyana* states are more beautiful than *Kamaloka* states and the transcendental path is more beautiful even than the *dhyana* states and so on. One thinks in those terms. But in comparison with the higher degree of *subha*, the lower is *asubha*. It's not that you've got beauty here and complete absence of beauty

there - there is a gradation, there is a series, there's a hierarchy, and you are trying to go from the lower to the higher levels of that hierarchy.

_____ : So there's a hierarchy of truth as well is there?

S: Yes. I said first of all reality. One can () more or less in the sense of reality. Even though, traditionally in Buddhism there is this distinction between either the two kinds of truth - the conventional and the absolute - or the three kinds - the illusory, the conventional and the absolute. In that sense, yes you do have a hierarchy of truths. Strictly speaking a hierarchy of these levels of reality.

Vidyasri: There are the four levels of *sunyata*, and the first level is seeing the conditioned empty of the unconditioned.

S: Yes.

Vidyasri: So is that when you see these three things. You see the conditioned as impermanent, as *anicca*, *anatta* and *dukkha*...

S: Yes.

Vidyasri: Well then on that level of *sunyata* would you see the conditioned as *asubha*?

S: Yes, you would see the conditioned as devoid of absolute beauty. Not devoid of all beauty whatsoever, but devoid of absolute beauty. Just as you don't see the conditioned as devoid of all happiness whatsoever, you see it as devoid of absolute and unconditioned happiness. Do you see what I mean? Sometimes the Theravadins, modern Theravadins in their presentation of the Dharma, they make this sort of mistake. They say well life is just *dukkha*, but that's not quite correct because life does contain some *sukkha*, it does contain some pleasure, some happiness, some joy, though mundane pleasure, happiness and joy. But what it is devoid of is absolute, unchanging happiness. That sort of happiness, transcendental happiness as one might say, is not found in conditioned existence. It's devoid of that.

Similarly with *subha*. Not that there's no beauty whatever in mundane existence, but the absolute beauty of the unconditioned does not exist in it, except perhaps, if you wanted to be poetic, well there are sort of reflections.

_____ : Could you say in what way those three terms, illusory, conventional and absolute.....

S: This is, as it were, standard *Yogachara* teaching. I've spelled it out in the appropriate chapter in '*The Survey*'.

_____ : So you could say that is the degrees of beauty as well?

S: These correspond to degrees of beauty, one could say.

_____ : I haven't really heard much about it but when you were talking at the last Tuscany about the Imaginal, would that perhaps link up with your seeing the spiritual path in terms of increasing beauty?

S: Very much, and you could say that the Imaginal (when it's with a capital 'I') will adapt the faculty for the apprehension of spiritual beauty, or beauty in the higher, or even highest sense. Yes,

one could say that.

Trish Robertson?: Is that what Ratnasambhava embodies?

S: One could look at it that way. One can look at these archetypal Buddha and Bodhisattva figures in many different ways. It's not that their meaning is fixed conceptually, but yes one can certainly see Ratnasambhava as exemplifying beauty or the beauty aspect of Enlightenment. One could certainly look at his figure in that way.

_____ : How about the dog's teeth? You gave an example in one of the lectures about you can see beauty in everything.

S: Yes, but can you see absolute beauty in everything? I mean everything, yes, is beautiful to some extent, one might say, or from a certain point of view; but what about absolute beauty?

_____ : But if you're in touch with absolute beauty you would see the positive in the mundane, would you?

S: What does one mean by the positive in the mundane?

_____ : The dog is rotting but you see the beautiful teeth. [*Laughter*]

S: The teeth are beautiful but you see the rotting carcass! What does one mean by seeing, let's say the absolute beauty, in something mundane? What does one mean exactly?

Vidyasri: Well wouldn't that be like then another level of *sunyata*, that then you see the

[End of side one side two]

_____ : *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa* where the Buddha shows everybody what he sees, and I've been wondering how that actually fits in with what you could see or what is or....

S: Well for instance if you go out into the country everything is really beautiful, all the trees and flowers, but if you saw more deeply into things would not the city appear just as beautiful? Could one say that? Is it? Or can one phrase it, as it were, in objective terms. Is the city, if only you could see it more deeply, as beautiful as the country?

_____ : Also you can see the country in another way. The country can be beautiful but then when you see the animals killing each other and things like that, it's not so beautiful!

S: It's all relative, as they say. What did you say?! [*Laughter*]

_____ : It's your attitude and what you perceive.

S: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder perhaps. [*Laughter*]

Vidyasri: I got lost where Sridevi was talking about regarding the teams, and then you said something after that and I missed it. [*Pause*]

S: It does raise this whole question of the nature of beauty, which is something that writers on aesthetics have been arguing about for centuries. We're certainly not going to settle it this morning. [*Laughter*] But I think that it is generally agreed that there is at least a subjective element in it, and

that one can, by bringing about a change in one's own mind, perceive things as, so to speak, more beautiful than before. I think at least that will be generally agreed. Though it still leaves unresolved the question, 'well what is beauty?' We'll take it that we all know, or at least have some idea of what we mean by beauty. Even though we might not actually agree as to whether any particular object was beautiful or not.

_____ : There is the line 'beauty is truth'.

S: Yes. I'm not so sure that Keats really knew what he meant when he wrote that! *[Laughter]* 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty - that is all you know on earth', he says, 'and all you need to know.' A bit of an exaggeration perhaps.

But to come back to the text, I think it is quite useful to bear in mind that there is this other way of looking at things, which is touched upon by the Buddha in the Pali Canon, but never developed by the Theravadins themselves, never developed by any other school I think, in the East to any extent - that is to say thinking of reality in terms of beauty and thinking of the spiritual path as a path of ever higher and higher levels of beauty, or maybe even spiritual beauty.

_____ : Wouldn't you say the Mahayana did that?

S: In a way it did inasmuch as it evoked all these beautiful forms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas but it never developed a sort of philosophy of beauty in the way, for instance, that Plato did or Plotinus did or the Sufis did. It never said in so many words that beauty is also a way. But in practice, in effect it was something like that because the Mahayana did invoke all these, as I said, beautiful forms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and certainly they are very very inspiring and they appeal to us aesthetically. It's a spiritual cum aesthetic appeal. Our emotions are involved, and that is one of the reasons why they are so important, these figures, because they can involve our emotions. That's really very useful.

_____ : When you were drawing out people's awareness of the Imaginal was it just from the actual group (unclear) this way or that way of practising, that approach to the spiritual path.

S: I think it would be useful because I think it would tend to counteract, even to balance, many people's excessively intellectual approach. Not only that but there are some people drawn into the Friends who are very much involved with the arts and who see things in terms of art and imagination. So I think that sort of approach will help make Buddhism more accessible.

Vidyasri: This kind of beauty - *subha* - to see things as beautiful in that sense you must be seeing them as what they are as well, so therefore seeing them as being impermanent, seeing that it's not just pleasing forms.

S: But in a way you see the beauty of the impermanence because you don't resist the impermanence. Therefore you accept it. So you can see that a falling of a withered leaf is beautiful and you can see the falling withered leaf as beautiful. There isn't anything that repels you or disgusts you, because you accept.

Vidyasri: So it's not just seeing pleasing forms or beautiful colours.

S: No, it's more than that.

Vidyasri: It's a quality.

S: Because *subha* means not only beautiful but 'pure'. I can only combine the two and say 'pure beauty' of things. It's not like something gross and (), flashy and gaudy and gross, it's not that sort of beauty. It's something more refined, more ethereal. If you like more angelic. Dare I say it, more virginal! But you know what I mean? If you think in terms of painters, something more akin to Fra Angelico than to Rubens.

_____ : This Imaginal though is a combination of understanding, of insight, and your imagination.

S: I prefer to speak of it as imagination in the highest sense, which not so much contains an element of insight but was, so to speak, equivalent to insight. You might say that the imaginal is that faculty by which or in which an apprehension of reality is mediated through images, rather than through abstract concepts.

For instance you can have the abstract concept of enlightenment, you can have a definition of enlightenment all neatly laid out, and you can understand that. On the basis of that understanding you can develop an insight into reality. On the other hand you may have a beautiful Buddha figure which really does do justice to, so to speak, the idea of enlightenment, which adequately represents enlightenment, and you can have an imaginative appreciation of that image which is so deep that that image mediates for you the reality which it represents. You see what I mean?

_____ : So it could actually go deeper in some ways than concepts.

S: It can do, though concepts too can go in very deeply depending on the use you make of them. Images also can go very deeply or your apprehension of reality through an image. Why not, if form is void and void is form, if *rupa* is *sunyata*, then why should not an image, which is a *rupa*, give you access to *sunyata*?

Though I have spoken of images in the sense of a Buddha, I don't mean images just in the literal sense. A figure of speech is an image.

_____ : So various different images are different for different people.

S: Are you speaking about Buddha images specifically now?

_____ : For instance.

_____ : What do you mean by a phrase or a figure of speech being an image?

S: Well for instance a simile is an image. A parable is an image. Even a metaphor is an image. An image doesn't necessarily mean a concrete visual representation. Or an image can be described in words.

_____ : How does that link up with Zen?

S: (Unclear) Zen doesn't go much in for the imaginal. Applied Zen does, so to speak. I was thinking of something that happened in Tuscany last year. One particular Order member, or he became an Order member rather, gave a couple of talks. These talks were entirely in terms of images. He sort of told a story and the story related a sort of progression of images and it was a very effective way of presenting (unclear). It stirred people quite deeply. It was completely non-conceptual. In one of these talks he started off by describing how a knight in shining armour on a white horse was riding up to a door of something or other, and people really were quite gripped by this and he went on and

on for about an hour or so. People were getting really into it, like a sort of almost transcendental fairy tale. Some of the Mahayana *Sutras* are like this.

So this is an approach. He definitely communicated something of the Dharma, just by this play of images, images verbally described. So one can do a lot with images. Images can relay some glimpse of reality, so to speak. One doesn't always have to use just conceptual things.

_____ : (unclear) evokes the senses.

S: The senses are involved, the emotions are involved, the mind is involved too.

_____ : (obscured by cough) quite a lot of yourself in it doesn't it.

S: Yes you can put more of yourself in.

So therefore when I read articles about things like 'scientific Buddhism', it really makes me shudder! Scientific Buddhism is a contradiction in terms. You think of something very cold and skeletal. At least I (unclear). I suppose even a skeleton is beautiful but [*Laughter*] even science is beautiful but nonetheless scientific Buddhism seems to me a rather wanting sort of phrasing.

_____ : How can you develop imagination?

S: Oh dear! [*Laughter*]

_____ : Go on solitary retreat.

S: How does one develop imagination? Well what do we mean by saying that someone is 'unimaginative'?

_____ : Narrow in their perception.

S: Narrow.

_____ : Habitual.

_____ : Too rational.

S: develop it in all sorts of ways. I suppose one could develop it by taking up pottery or painting or something of that sort, try to develop some specific faculty or even technique. One could develop it by acquainting oneself with great imaginative works of art and literature. I think that would help. It might even help just to get out of your ordinary, dull, daily routine. Bring about a change in your way of life. Perhaps that would help. Maybe associate with imaginative people, not just with dull, plodding, rational, routine-ridden people.

_____ : Studying art you would need a good teacher. Somebody who is very in touch.

S: (*constant interruption by coughing*) good teacher who really has a strong feeling and appreciation not just an historical knowledge of the subject. Sometimes when visiting art galleries in London I happen to overhear a lecturer taking round a flock of students and listen to one of these lecturers describing (unclear) sometimes they say something useful but at other times it's absolutely beside the point. It's as though they haven't even seen the thing, haven't really looked at it, aren't really moved by it, what to speak of being carried away by it all.

Vidyasri: There's something sort of ever transcending about the quality of the imagination because I thought that you could have a very good all round education in which you know some great paintings and music, and yet you stay within the bounds of that, within the bounds of the familiar and what somebody else has come out with and there isn't a kind of expansive movement in you to go beyond that.

S: Well I was reading an article the other day in the paper about someone who was travelling in a foreign capital and went to one of the art galleries and he overheard a couple there - it might have been in America - but they were in some distress because they'd lost their guide book and they didn't know which pictures they particularly ought to admire! *[Laughter]* It really is pathetic but this is what happens much of the time. You need a sort of cue from some more positive source before you know what to admire, what not to admire.

Vidyasri: Well I feel that almost in myself sometimes, a sort of fear to actually break free of that and actually admire....

S: Yes, otherwise you might reveal you're incredibly naive or admiring something that everybody else regards as just old hat.

Vidyasri: They might think you're stupid.

S: Yes. Have you read the right books or been to the right sort of school or not have the right friends.

S: I think that is quite important. However right or however wrong you may be, in a sense, you should know what you like and you don't like. Say 'well I like that' and somebody else might say well it's just a pretty chocolate box sort of picture, but 'I like it' and then ask yourself well why do I like it? What is it about it that I like? Is it something genuine? Or am I just being silly and sentimental or have I just seen something that other people have missed? And if you are shown some great masterpiece and told how wonderful it is and you're not impressed, well just say 'well I'm not impressed'. Don't pretend to admire it. Say well I think this doesn't make any (impression?). It may be that you're not developed enough yet to appreciate it. On the other hand it may be that the other people are all humbugging themselves, they're just trying to see things that aren't really there.

But be quite sure about your own responses. You should have your own responses, even though they may not be completely correct, but at least know what they are and acknowledge them.

_____ : If you don't do that it's like the beginning - you can't actually grow, you can't actually change beyond that if you don't acknowledge what your actual response is.

S: It may be that your appreciation of art is incredibly naive and undeveloped, well never mind. Just work from what you actually appreciate. It may be you do think for instance - changing the context slightly - that Barbara Cartland is the greatest novelist who ever lived! *[Laughter]* If you really think that well say so and stick to it! Throw away your George Eliot and Jane Austen, stick up for Barbara Cartland if you admire her! *[Laughter obscures Bhante's words]* go beyond her, if she actually can be gone beyond! *[LOUD Laughter]* I didn't think (unclear) Barbara Cartland. She may be the greatest writer since Shakespeare for all I know! You all seem to have read her! *[Laughter]* She's very popular if nothing else. I'm sure she's been translated into Finnish.

_____ : (unclear) *[Laughter]*

S: I can just imagine Finnish ladies sitting around their stoves through the long Finnish winter nights reading their Barbara Cartland.

_____ : Have you read her?

S: I read one. *[Laughter]* That means, I think, I've read them all! She got him in the end! *[Laughter]* He was a Duke, in this particular novel, a French Duke. He had three palaces, all very luxuriously furnished.

_____ : You seem to be suggesting from what you said that as long as you know what you feel, in the end that's going to lead you to the truth.

S: Not necessarily, not automatically. Provided also you do actually really pursue the matter and have perhaps good spiritual friends in the artistic sense who can help you educate your taste and introduce you to new and maybe better works of art and encourage you to reason and talk to you about (unclear)

_____ : Because I think that same sort of principle applies to everything, like with study if one's studying one has to be honest about one's actual response to what's there and then in that situation be open and then hopefully they'll be other..... you've got spiritual friends there who can then come back at you, because it's quite easy to not have confidence in your response to something, and then it doesn't change.

S: You should have confidence in your response, though not necessarily in the rightness of your response. You should say, 'well this is my response, whether it's the right response, all right that can be an open question, but meanwhile this is my response, this is how I feel'. Even if you say 'well I do feel the Pali Scriptures are boring, that's my response, though I'm quite open to someone showing me things in them which make them not boring, but my present response is, reading them, that they're boring'. You have to be honest. Not think 'oh I dare not say that, I mustn't say that, the Pali Scriptures are boring, I'll be excommunicated for saying that!' *[Laughter]* No, just be true to your feeling, but recognise that it may be capable of modification in the light of fresh insight and understanding. I remember a few years ago when it was first proposed, or I first proposed, to study a Pali text, there were groans all round, people thought it would be dull and boring, but then they found it wasn't dull and boring at all. They were quite surprised.

_____ : I think there's something I've really appreciated about being involved in the Friends is that your response is given validity, but at the same time you're encouraged to go beyond it.

S: It's valid as a response. Your feeling is valid as a feeling.

_____ : Yes, because at school I felt that that's what most blocked me in education was because my response I felt wasn't considered valid and that I should be thinking something else, so I couldn't really.....

S: Or even feeling something else. Well perhaps you should, but in the meantime your present feeling has to be fully acknowledged. You have to proceed from there, from that feeling.

_____ : It's as if there were sets of things that you should feel and think and if you didn't feel and think those well then there was no hope for you. It feels that that's quite an important thing in the Friends - I was thinking in terms of education more - just by human contact with people if we can get something of that across, that's quite an important thing just on that kind of level - that one's own responses and feelings are valid even though you can obviously go beyond them. I think that

doesn't happen very much in the outside world.

S: They have to be acknowledged. You can't ignore them. You can't pretend they're not there or pretend to have other feelings that you don't actually have. That's even worse.

_____ : This reminds of something we were discussing at another time, and this was where will came in. We were talking about how you knew that, what created that.

S: Will.

_____ : (unclear) in your practice or at least (unclear) as opposed to creative effort.

S: I think this depends on the degree of your integration. If you're not very integrated, a measure of will may have to be applied, but applied, so to speak, mindfully, even extra mindfully just from time to time perhaps. But supposing you don't want to get up in the morning and meditate, perhaps two thirds of you wants to stay in bed but then you have to mobilise your will power, so to speak, and get yourself up.

But one can say I think that that the spiritual life cannot be run entirely on will power, though you may have to exert will power on occasion, or in emergencies.

Sometimes you need to exert will power just to get yourself over a hump, as it were. You may know that if you exert your will power and get yourself out of bed and down into that shrine room, well then you'll be all right, and you will be glad that you have done it. You won't need a continuous effort of will to keep you there. You just need to make that one little effort of will, exert your will power just on that particular occasion, in that particular respect, to get you over the hump.

_____ : Is will power then something when only a very small part of you is involved?

S: I think so. I think if you're a fully integrated person and if your conscious idea of yourself is totally adequate to your being, then your total energy is behind everything that you do, and the question of will power as a sort of separate faculty, almost opposed to the rest of you, doesn't arise. Perhaps your will becomes spontaneity. You could say that that is what spontaneity is. When all your energy is instantly available for everything that you do.

Dhammadinna: Can I just go back to when you were talking about developing insight? Something I found on my solitary - I'm not saying that I was developing insight but it seemed to be going in that direction - was just looking at things. I found looking at the sheep for example [*Laughter*] for periods of time quite.....

S: What, just thinking what silly creatures they were! Or how wonderful and woolly they looked.

Dhammadinna: No, no, just sort of watching what they did. I think particularly because people if they see you looking at them will change what they're doing sometimes because they feel self conscious, but sheep just do whatever they do. They don't really know how to pay much attention.

S: Sometimes they do!

Dhammadinna: Not if you're just sitting there quietly. I mean not just that but, in a way, just taking in.

S: Sometimes they look at you very suspiciously! [*Laughter*] They might not know that you're a

vegetarian! [*LOUD Laughter*] But I know what you mean. [*Laughter*]

Dhammadinna: Taking whatever happens to be there - a sheep or

S: I wasn't suggesting you had a thing about sheep! [*Laughter*]

Dhammadinna: Just an example! Do you think there's a value? I felt there was a value.

S: Well this is an instance of what I've called elsewhere just awareness of things, awareness of nature, awareness of the external world, and very often we don't give ourselves enough time to look at it and really see what is there. But I think, yes, it is actually a quite useful exercise, so to speak. Look at a tree, look at a plant and then an animal, look at a horse, look at a cow. In a place like Surlingham you can do this if you go for a little walk.

Dhammadinna: I kind of got the feeling that if you really could see any of those things, but you could see everything. If you really could see into that sheepness or whatever, anything really. That you'd be seeing everything.

S: You just have to cultivate that faculty of looking. You can do it with regard, almost to any object. A stone, or look at the sky. People are much more complex. It's easier if the thing is simple. Maybe plants are good things to start with. Look at your household plant.

_____ : There's that story of the painter of bamboos.

S: That's right.

_____ : (unclear - spoken very quietly) It reminds me of one of Milarepa's disciples. He went to get some water or something I suppose it depends what basis of watching the sheep. You can get totally distracted and maybe stop meditating.

S: Well he wasn't supposed to be watching sheep.

Vidyasri: No, it wasn't a conscious decision to actually go and watch goats, he just got distracted by them.

S: Anyway any further point?

_____ : Something that came up in our group was that there are some people who think that all human beings at some time in their lives had some glimmer that there was something more than just mundane existence, but I, and some other people, didn't think that this was necessarily the case, not unless they were shown it by someone - like you were saying that if you got a football hooligan on their own you might be able to communicate the Dharma, but I was still thinking of the Buddha's vision of all human beings being like lotuses, some being like closed right up, some being part way open, some being really open, I hadn't thought that that was the case, that all beings, at some time had some glimmer of something more.

S: I think it has been said that probably more people than we generally realise, quite apart from any contact with any organised religion, do have some kind of experience that is out of the ordinary, that makes them think, or makes them aware of some higher dimension of things, but I doubt very much whether everybody has that. Even though more people have this sort of experience than one might usually think, it's still only I think quite a small proportion of the total population that have this. I would even go further than that. Even a lot of those who are in some contact with some

religion and might think of themselves as religious people, many priests perhaps, don't have any such glimpse at all for the whole of their lives.

I think everybody could see something. If you could only get hold of them and spend some time with them and (spell it out), but left to their own devices, so to speak, I don't think it happens in the case of very many people. But even so, more than one might think. But one can't really know, one might say. There is no real statistic, no hard statistical information. [Pause]

Vidyasri: Following on from that, somebody said well then why are they born into a human body if they don't have a kind of at least some time of actually realising that potential even in a moment or a few seconds, then why are they born into a human body, why aren't they just born as cows or.....

S: Well you're born into a human body, even according to traditional Buddhist teaching, as a result of having lived an ethical life, having observed, for instance the precepts, but an ethical life is not the same thing as a life of spiritual vision. No doubt every human being is capable, I think, of seeing something, having a glimpse, if it's only pointed out. So your good karma is enough to create for you the possibility of having them pointed out, but not to sort of give it to you absolutely. That may depend upon other people, the availability of other people, the willingness of other people, their capacity for growth.

Vidyasri: I still find it hard to believe that some human beings are monstrous and do monstrous, sort of evil things, and..

S: Well Milarepa did for instance.

Vidyasri: Yes.

S: But then he met Marpa. Marpa gave him a very tough time. Angulimala. I don't think one can write off anybody absolutely, whatever they have done. Sometimes it's very difficult not to write them off, but human beings can change, even in one lifetime. So that holds fast even more hope to those who haven't done anything rotten. Just (unclear) foolishness is little more than that, little meannesses, nothing more than that. [Pause]

Any final point?

_____ : Just at the end of Section Ten where it talks about - it says 'its disadvantages and abandonment in the absence of desire and the sensation of desire'. Is it talking about this 'it' that's (unclear) the whole of conditioned existence?

S: Yes I think it's the whole of conditioned existence. All the things. The grammar isn't very eloquent here. It could of course refer to impermanence which is of course (unclear) ... impermanence of all things, its disadvantages, the disadvantages of impermanence, that is to say, i.e. the conditioned.

Anyway we've gone quite well into these two paragraphs. All right let's leave them there.

[End of Session]

[End of tape three Tape four]

S: So what ground has been covered?

_____ : We've come to the end of the Chapter. Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen.

S: Any questions arising or was it all crystal clear?! [Laughter]

_____ : There didn't seem to be so many questions arising out of the text. One thing I was wondering about. In Section Eleven, in reading that, I was reminded of your tape on the Case of Dysentery about the spiritual community providing everything for each other because they couldn't depend on the group, and I was wondering because a lot of people in our group are mitras, so they haven't Gone for Refuge, they're not, strictly speaking, part of the spiritual community, so it feels that they're a bit in the middle,

S: Yes, that's true.

_____ : They can't be part of the spiritual community but they've sort of stepped away from the group, so how would you see a mitra's position?

S: Well I would see a mitra's position as one of transition. You can, I suppose, in theory, decide that you're going to be a mitra indefinitely, but that would mean that you've precluded the possibility of Going for Refuge and almost you set a definite limit to your progress. If you did that your position, so to speak, with one foot in at least the positive group, and the other foot maybe in the world outside, would be quite (*unclear due to clattering noises in the room!*) experience (unclear) pulls and conflicts. I think it's as though to be really a mitra, in the full sense, you have to have your mind open at least to the distant possibility that you might want to Go for Refuge. Not close your mind against learning all the time even if you see it as something that might happen towards the end of a long and eventful life. It's as though you can't be on the spiritual path in any sense, even on the lower rungs, unless you are moving, however slowly. That particular talk was of course directed to an audience of Order members so I was speaking specifically of relations within the spiritual community.

_____ : Do you not think that mitras should have that kind of responsibility towards each other, that they're somehow in between?

S: You could. Inasmuch as their ultimate responsibility is a spiritual responsibility, if you haven't made a specifically spiritual commitment, with both of you say in the case of two mitras, if you haven't specifically made that spiritual commitment, you haven't got it to fall back on in relating to each other. It's as though if somebody else has made the same spiritual commitment as you have, in a sense you have absolute claim upon them. If they haven't made that, or if you haven't made that, and they haven't made that, no such 'claim', in inverted commas, exists.

_____ : Could you say a bit more about what you mean by 'absolute claim'?

S: Well if someone has Gone for Refuge, that person is in effect declaring that spiritual life, spiritual development, is the most important thing for them in life. So suppose there is another person similarly committed - supposing these two people are in contact - then either of them has the right to evoke that in the case of the other. In other words has the right to remind the other person what his or her commitment is, and remind them that that has to be given first place, that has to take precedence, that has absolute claim, and if you as, let's say, a fellow Order member, embody that claim, well you can make that claim. For instance in the specific case that I mentioned in that particular talk, when a fellow Order member is sick, well that Order member has, so to speak, an absolute claim upon the time, energy and attention of another Order member. Do you see what I mean?

_____ : But not a mitra?

S: No, because a mitra hasn't made that sort of commitment. If out of the goodness of his or her heart he chooses to do something [*Laughter and chattering obscures Bhante*] claim. Usually the word 'claim', as I said is within inverted commas.

_____ : You have got an absolute right to.....

S: You are able to remind them that they ought to be living up to their commitment. Their commitment to, in this case, the Sangha, a fellow member of the Sangha. Supposing for example there was a rival claim, supposing you, an Order member, were sick, and you needed the attention of another Order member, but supposing that other Order member had to go and preach the Dharma, well then between you, quite objectively, you would decide which was the greater claim. The claim of one sick Order member upon the time and attention of another, and the claim on the non-sick Order member to go and preach the Dharma. But if you profess the commitment you can be, so to speak, held to that, and you would wish to be held to it if you show signs of backsliding or resigning from it.

So if you have a common spiritual commitment, or if you and another person have a common spiritual commitment that entirely changes the relationship between you. Because then you have to consider everything that concerns you, including your relationship with someone, whoever it may be, in the light of what is best for the spiritual development of both parties. You are obliged then to consider your relationship in those terms.

_____ : It almost seems that this - a question about the Sangha came up the other day and it seems to me that this is the crux of the matter. What makes it so different.

S: The crux is if the pull, say from your family, is stronger effectively than the pull say from the spiritual community, you have not really Gone for Refuge. Or supposing when you are sick you don't feel like staying in the spiritual community - even supposing they are quite willing to have you and look after you - you feel like going home to mother or big sister, and that's where you want to be when you're not feeling very well, it shows again you haven't really Gone for Refuge. Or if you are in trouble, if you've got some problem, you feel very disturbed, very unhappy, if you want to go and talk to some old friend of yours right outside the spiritual community rather than to someone within the spiritual community, that could mean - I won't say absolutely will mean, but it could mean - that you haven't really Gone for Refuge. I say it could rather than would, because it may be that you've not, unfortunately, succeeded in creating a real spiritual friendship within the Sangha, even though you have genuinely, in principle, Gone for Refuge. In a moment of weakness you go and lay your head on some shoulder outside. This is quite an important point, because if your spiritual commitment is really important to you, if there's something of ultimate value for you, if you share that commitment with another person, then, as I said that will entirely alter your attitude towards that person. The other person may be someone that you normally wouldn't have even thought of getting to know or getting on with, someone whom you'd, in a sense, instinctively dislike perhaps, but then you know they've made the same spiritual commitment that you have. You must have something in common. And if your spiritual commitment is of importance to you, the fact that somebody else has made that same spiritual commitment, it means then that he or she is important to you, regardless of how you may feel on a purely personal level.

So the fact that there is a common spiritual commitment should transcend all other (unclear). It isn't easy though we can say. You may find some people you find it difficult to get on with, even in the spiritual community. One has to work on that, because you have a common basis, you have the

most solid possible common basis. In other words your common commitment. If you've been brought together into the same spiritual community you must have something deeply in common. You must be like one another, in the most important sense that there is, the only sense that really matters. You may have blue eyes and she may have brown, you may be () and she may be () [*Laughter*] she may be middle class and you may be working class. What does it matter? - you have the same spiritual commitment.

_____ : Is there such a thing as collective responsibility? Like the state is responsible for providing.....

S: You mean in the case of the Sangha?

_____ : Yes.

S: Not strictly. Only if one uses the word 'collective' just as a convenient term for the sum total of individual responsibilities. It's not that the Sangha as a collective entity is responsible, but A and B and C and D and all the other members of the Sangha are individually responsible. So if you like you can add up all those individual responsibilities and refer to them as a collective responsibility. One must be careful of using that sort of language in that way. [Pause]

There's a way in which one can perhaps see how seriously one takes this common spiritual commitment. If you've got say some free time, time you are free to spend with anybody that you choose practically, who do you choose to spend it with, or who would you most like to spend it with? Now I am speaking mainly with regard to Order members. Who would you most like to spend it with? Who would you like to go away on holiday with for example? Or who do you usually go away with? In other words who would you most enjoy, who would you most readily or naturally think about for spending free time with? It should, ideally, be with some fellow Order member, because that person is an Order member, not for some adventitious reason.

Vidyasri: Not because you like them?

S: Not simply because you like them. [*Laughter*] Not simply because you like them on the personal level. The person with whom you should like to spend most time is the person with whom or in whose company you can most deepen your own commitment (unclear) deepen there.

_____ : Where does friendship come in? [*Laughter*]

S: Well there is friendship, there is spiritual friendship.

_____ : I mean I can see that but..... [Pause]

S: Who are your friends? It's a simple question. Who are your friends? What is a friend, what is friendship? [Pause]

Has there ever been a discussion of friendship? I don't mean just on this session but in any other study group any of your attended?

_____ : It seems to have come up (unclear)...

S: One of things I've been saying lately is that we talk of spiritual friendship but perhaps we ought to be clear to begin with what we mean about friendship.

Karola: I'm about to potentially embark on a friendship with somebody and this person actually isn't involved with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order what am I to (unclear). I mean potentially could she be my friend, because in a sense I assume she's going to be living and ethical, moral life

S: Perhaps one needs to put it in an extreme form - could you develop a friendship say with someone who was a criminal? Would it be possible? Would you be friends say with a burglar or a bank robber? Would it be possible? What is friendship? What does it mean to have a friend. What is the basis of friendship? One can go of course right back to Aristotle's Ethics. Aristotle maintains that friendship is possible only between the virtuous, because they alone have sufficient integrity, so to speak, to be friends. That would rule out your bank robber or your burglar. Well what about friendship between thieves, as they say? Would it be possible say for two bank robbers to be genuinely friends, or two burglars?

_____ : In a sense yes. (unclear) there's exchange, mutual exchange..... but if there's something to do with trust in a certain small area thieves understand each other and trust each other not to 'grass' on each other and that sort of thing. So in a small way there's a sort of trust.

S: But they can't very often trust absolutely. There are such things as 'grasses' and 'supergrasses' and all the rest of it.

Karola: But there is a point where they connect.

_____ : In that situation the friendship breaks down when they have completed that task. I would have thought on another level they would, like Karola says, if someone was virtuous, even though they might not actually be in a spiritual community, sometimes that kind of friendship could have gone a lot further though maybe not as far.

S: One might say friendship would be possible but not spiritual friendship, because for spiritual friendship to be possible there must be a common spiritual element which is a common basis, a common principle, to which both of you refer, and in the light of which, perhaps, you try to develop more friendship. [Pause]

How do people find their friendships with people outside the Movement, those who still have friendships outside the Movement? How do they find them? Do they find they can keep them up? Do they develop or do they keep them in a separate little compartment? What happens? Leave aside say friendships at work which would probably come to an end if you left that particular job.

_____ : You just find that as time goes on you've got less and less in common.

_____ : I find that people I know like that, it's incredibly frustrating because they seem to stay in the same states for longer and longer times. You might feel you're actually experiencing some growth together and then they go back. They don't seem to want to change.

S: That would suggest that if you yourself are thinking in terms of growth and development, you can only really be friends with someone else who is also thinking in terms of growth and development. Because if you are thinking in those terms and they are not, sooner or later they'll be such a gulf between you that it's very difficult for you to sort of reach hands across it. You will have changed so much perhaps.

_____ : Over the last year or two I developed one or two friends outside the Movement both at college and people who (unclear) who in their own way I don't think are less developed. They

haven't been (unclear) only a couple of years, I don't know how far it can go, but I've certainly found that very valuable for me, and they have, and our friendship's now getting stronger. But they aren't in a spiritual community, but they are definitely trying to develop themselves in their own particular way, which I found quite useful because it made me question certain attitudes that I've taken on without realising, which other people in the spiritual community also have without realising, so we don't actually question them.

S: But the point here is, as you say, those other people are trying to develop, at least in their own way.

Vidyasri: Because I think I find that the people I would say call my friends, even within the Friends, it's probably only a few people who I'd really call my friends, are the people with whom I can express most of myself. That's the friendship and the communication that I actually find most attractive and most satisfying.

S: If you have say a friendship with people who are not growing in any way, and you yourself are growing, well a new you develops and a you perhaps which they don't want to know, and which therefore you cannot express to them. This especially happens with one's relations and those with whom you've grown up and perhaps in some cases with both parents. They don't want to know the new you so you can't relate to them as you actually are, you can't share your present experiences with them. Perhaps they don't want to know them. That can make life very difficult (unclear) friendship will dissolve.

Vidyasri: What Liz said about finding friendships frustrating, because actually I've got very few that I've kept up other than relations. I think just one person who's a resigned mitra. And I find it frustrating because there are things in common that I have and say she has, she does have somewhere an aspiration towards growth - that's why once she was a mitra - but she's not following it up and that's where the frustration comes because there are points where you know you connect and then it doesn't go further.

Liz: But their cycles are so much slower, in the sense that they will again have another go at another time. It's quite difficult.

S: Does that illumine what you were thinking about your.....

Karola: Um..... Yes! [*Laughter*] I was just thinking that you look to something that can actually nourish at some point your ideal. (unclear) There are certain aspects (unclear)

S: Well there are friends and friends. No doubt one can have a number of friends, but if you are basically and essentially concerned with your development as an individual, your closest friends would - one might even say should - be those who have the same concerns, because your close friends have quite an influence on you. Supposing you have a close friend or maybe you're living with that close friend, they don't attach any importance say to individual development, supposing for the sake of argument they don't consider meditation important, they don't know anything about it, well they might resent the fact even that you wanted to sit for meditation every morning and every evening. At least they wouldn't encourage you. They certainly wouldn't encourage you by sitting with you in the way that someone who was committed in the same way that you were would. That person might say, 'oh come on, don't bother about meditation this evening, let's go and see a film', and you'd feel a conflict. There's your friendship for that person pulling you one way, your wish to keep up your regular meditation practice pulling you the other.

_____ : Are such friends as important, very important to a Bodhisattva? [*Laughter*]

S: What do you mean by such friends?

_____ : Those who (unclear) to have friends as important to a Bodhisattva as it is say for us.

S: I think so long as there is a possibility of further spiritual development, so long friends are important, but clearly a Bodhisattva will need Bodhisattva friends just as maybe a mitra will need mitra friends and an upasika will need upasika friends, and so on. Maybe a Buddha will need Buddha friends. The Mahayana does sort of hint at something like that. But I would say so long as there is some further level or stage to be achieved, spiritual friends are very helpful in achieving them. I think one shouldn't think in terms of eventually growing beyond a need for spiritual friendship. I think one will always need it. Even if one doesn't need it, well one might say then it will be a pure delight, it'll add an extra dimension to one's total spiritual experience, an element of reciprocity, of seeing say your own experience, your own realisation even, in somebody else. That gives an additional dimension to your experience. One might even say well eventually the whole question of even spiritual friendship is superseded because you no longer think so exclusively in terms of subject and object - myself and the other person. That is quite a development.

But so long as you experience yourself as yourself and the other person as the other person, and you are aspiring spiritually and have something further to aspire to, so long spiritual friendship will be absolutely indispensable, and more and more enjoyable. I don't know how it is among the women but certainly among the men in the Movement recently, there's been a sort of growing realisation that nobody really knows what friendship is. It's a very rare thing. You're not really friends with someone just because you get on with them all right or can spend an evening out together quite happily. Friendship goes much further, much deeper than that, and this is beginning to be realised I think in the Movement generally, and that you have to work on your friendships. They take a long time to come to maturity. Some of the people who went to Tuscany last year were a bit surprised that they didn't end up with more really strong friendships. Some progress was made but then they also realised that even under the most favourable conditions, even with the best will in the world, friendships still need time to develop. It needs perhaps two or three years to become consolidated. Friendship isn't like love, into which you can fall and out of which you can fall all in the space of weeks, not to say days, not to say hours! *[Laughter]* Friendship is much more like the oak tree, it's not like the rose which blooms and dies in a day. The growth of the oak tree requires centuries, so to speak.

So I think people have to take friendship, and especially spiritual friendship, that much more seriously, really work on your spiritual friendships, more than the ordinary friendships.

Vidyasri: What do you mean by 'work'? Do you mean spend time with people?

S: Make space for it mainly. This is again one of the things that people - again I speak more of the men because I've been hearing more about these things from them but it may well apply to the women - but many people have been saying you really need to make an effort to make space, so to speak. To put aside time to spend with someone that you want to be friends with or developing a spiritual friendship with. Otherwise, if you're too busy, well it'll be just one thing after another and you may see someone just for half an hour or have a quick walk round the park - but that's not enough, you need much more space than that. I'm even told it's become a bit of a joke down in London among some of the mitras about having a quick walk around the park with an Order member *[Laughter]* and the Order member is looking at his or her watch because he or she has got another appointment immediately afterwards! You seem to recognise the picture! But yes, time. If you have to keep looking at your watch it's very difficult to concentrate *[Laughter]*

_____ : It's quite frustrating though sometimes. Because it does need so much time, I mean I find in a way I need to really spend that sort of time with one or two people and do other things, that's about it really!

S: I said last year, maybe early this year talking with some of the men Order members, that I felt that if they took their responsibilities towards their mitra, assuming they've only got one mitra, seriously, they should spend at least two hours with him every day, and I modified that subsequently to spend four hours, because *[Laughter]* unless you really devote some time to it you're not going to get very far very quickly. It takes time to know another person.

_____ : All the Order members will have to stop working (unclear)

Viv: There aren't enough women Order members to go round.

_____ : (unclear)

S: I think one of the reasons is people have not yet given serious enough consideration to these questions. I think more Order members could make more time. I'm not saying this one or that one but more in a general way more Order members could make more time, and I've been encouraging them to do this recently.

_____ : There are people who do feel (unclear) living in a closed community it's easier to find time to spend (unclear)

S: Not necessarily because they're all very busy. The busiest person, apart from me, is Subhuti, who takes his responsibilities, for want of a better word, as a *Kalyana Mitra*, very very seriously. He really loves spending time with his mitras, but it's so difficult for him sometimes. Sometimes he just has to take them with him when he drives off somewhere, so they at least spend two or three hours together in the car *[Laughter]* and they can talk while he's driving or while they're driving him, because he's very very busy. But I think in Padmaloka community as a whole, there is a realisation of the importance of spending time together and some of the people living in the community do go out together for the evening or for a day or half a day and I think there's probably more of that within the Padmaloka community than there is within some other communities. I won't say more than that. It does help if you're all living under the same roof and not going outside to work, not even in a co-op, it does help. But it doesn't happen automatically. Even under those conditions you still have to make quite an effort to spend time with other people. For instance I came back from India in March I think it was and I was back here for about two months and it dawned on me that since I'd come back I hadn't spoken, actually, to two community members who were also Order members, who had been with me in Tuscany. For two whole months I hadn't spoken to them except to say hello or just ask them something at breakfast. So I decided I just had to sort of make time which I subsequently did. So much is going on, it's very easy to forget or to overlook the fact that one hasn't spent (unclear). Even people that one gets on with very well, with whom there's no difficulty in communication, and then it can be quite frustrating. To get on with them so well but to never get a chance to see them, hardly ever get. Maybe an Order Weekend or something like that. I would say that for the mitra *Kalyana Mitrata* is very very important and quite a factor in someone becoming ready, so to speak, for ordination.

I think the people who have difficulties, so to speak, psychological or otherwise, whether before ordination or afterwards, are the people who haven't developed strong spiritual friendships. I think that's quite a vital thing.

Vidyasri: I find I have to be quite determined say around the LBC where there's a lot of women

who I'm friends with a lot of them, to sort of try and spend more time with a fewer number of people because there are potentially thirty or forty people I could actually - a lot of them I could get to know and spend time with, and yet actually I can't, it's not actually possible and so I have to make quite an effort.

S: One of the things we decided this year with regard to Tuscany is that each Order member there, on the Tuscany course, will, so to speak, be responsible for three or perhaps four mitras, in the sense of making a special effort to have intensive contact with those three or four people during that three month period. Rather than try to spread himself evenly over everybody so that every mitra gets a small amount of time from every Order member, and we've decided to do things a bit differently this year. Each Order member will keep up some contact with everybody but concentrate on keeping up contact with and developing friendship with just three or, in some cases, possibly four. I think that might work better.

_____ : (unclear)

S: Oh yes! *[Laughter]* I'm not drawing up lists. I know no one will be left out. I don't think so.

Viv: Isn't that a bit like a spiritual hierarchy in that the mitras which are nearer to becoming Order members have Order members' time and maybe those of us who aren't so near can have time from mitras that are nearer because of encroaching on Order members' time.

S: That is also true yes. It has been noticeable, certainly among the men mitras, that some more experienced or maybe more balanced men mitras are able to give quite a lot to the very new men mitras. This does happen certainly. It happened in Tuscany last year. *[Pause]*

Anyway this question of friendship, spiritual friendship in particular, is very important. I think we need to give quite a bit of attention to create space for it.

Any further topic?

_____ : I wanted to ask something about the *Asravas*. It seems that even when you've got a way on the spiritual path you still have these poisons.

S: Or biases. It can be translated either way. I prefer 'bias', though *Asravas* also means something that's (unclear), something that's noxious, therefore poison.

_____ : I just wondered how it related to the fetter because in the fetters I thought you broke the sensory bias and (unclear) process of life in terms of (unclear)

S: The *Asravas* seem to be a very archaic formulation, perhaps more basic than that of the fetters. *Kamasava* is the bias towards sensuous experience. *Bhavasava* is the bias towards individualised existence itself conceived as something static and not changing, and *Avijjasava* is the bias towards ignorance. One might say spiritual obscurity, darkness, confusion. They all represent, one might say, different forms of the pull of the conditioned. Sometimes it is said that *Bhavasava* refers to one's bias towards existence in the *rupaloka* and *arupaloka*, more refined (unclear) whereas *Avijjasava* is one's bias towards all mundane existence itself.

_____ : (unclear)

S: Hmm, yes. It's a sort of blind inertia that prevents one from growing and developing. *[Pause]*

_____ : Is 'false views and a lack of higher knowledge', do they both come under *Avijjasava*?

S: Originally there seem to have been three *asavas*. The third being *Avijja*, or lack of higher knowledge or ignorance, but a fourth - *Dittasava* - the *asava* of *ditthi* or view or false view, seems to have crept in but it's difficult to see what the difference really is between that and the third one except that perhaps the fourth represents a sort of higher degree of crystallisation. Do you see what I mean? It's as though there is the basic *avijja* or ignorance....

[End of side one side two]

_____ : Where it's *Kama Asava*, is that the same as the *Kamaloka* and is it the same....

S: Yes, it's the same as *Kamaloka*.

_____ : It's not *Karma*?

S: No, the Pali word for action is *Kamma*, double 'm', this is one 'm', the Sanskrit is *Karma*, but *Kama* in the sense of desire is the same in Pali and Sanskrit. It's a long first 'a', a single a, *kama*, not *kamma* or *karma*.

_____ : The way it's put here in terms of the mind set around with wisdom (unclear) *Asravas* suggests that wisdom in a certain sense is something (unclear).

S: It is also support. A mind set around with wisdom, supported by that, even permeated by that if you like, completely suffused by that, because it refers to being surrounded by *silā*, surrounded by *samadhi*. Set around with wisdom. It's *samadhi* set around with the moralities is highly fruitful and productive. *Panna* set around with *samadhi* is highly fruitful and productive.

Vidyasri: Is that just a poetic way of putting it?

S: I'm not sure. One could take it in that way, but one could take it in the sense of giving support. *Samadhi* set around with the moralities - well *samadhi* is supported by the moralities. Your ethical life supports your meditative life.

Vidyasri: But I seem to find it confusing because it's saying the lack of higher knowledge, which... isn't that the same as *prajna*, so it's like *prajna* supporting *prajna*?

S: Yes, in the end it is. Because of course *Prajna* doesn't need any support. *Samadhi* needs the support of *Silā*, and *Prajna* needs the support of *Samadhi* for its development, but once *Prajna* is developed it doesn't need any other support, it's just a transcendental fact. It stands, as it were, on its own feet.

_____ : In the "Survey" you say wrong views are twin born with right views.

S: Ah, yes. In a sense of an intellectual formulation. Because for instance, supposing you posit the existence of God, logically you posit the non-existence of God. It is concept at the same time and vice versa. Here there are affirmation and negation coming together. I wasn't speaking of Perfect View, I'm speaking of right view and wrong view.

_____ : I just wondered if it tied up with (unclear)..... if you've got basic ignorance then out of that you get wrong views (unclear)

S: Well there would be the possibility for right view, logically speaking, because to obtain right view you'd only have to turn the wrong view inside out, so to speak. The terms would be there, even if you weren't using them rightly. For instance the term 'God' might be there; you were using it wrongly and saying well God exists, or you could turn that inside out, use it rightly, and say God does not exist.

So affirmation is in respect of the same terms as negation. Affirmation affirms. Well negation negates, so the possibility of affirmation and the possibility of negation then go together, so in that way wrong views and right views are twin born. In that sort of - what shall I say? - formal, logical sense. Not that someone who holds right views necessarily holds wrong views or vice versa, but where there is a possibility of formulation of a wrong view, there is the possibility of the formulation of a right view. Because the terms are the same. Perhaps I should say the possibility of the formulation of the corresponding right or wrong view, not any right or wrong view.

The idea that the universe is finite suggests the idea that perhaps the universe is not finite, but you are dealing with the same terms - world, finite, not finite.

Vidyasri: Higher up on that page it says 'as long as they maintain that noble understanding which leads to freedom', does that noble understanding mean anything in particular or is it just wisdom generally?

S: It's *Aryajnana*. It seems to mean the understanding which is based on the actual practise of the Dharma, especially the practise of meditation. [Pause]

Did you discuss, by any chance, this question of sharing with others whatever you receive [Laughter] (unclear)

_____ : We spent over an hour and a half actually.

S: The common purse. So that was settled was it? That's why it hasn't come up.

_____ : It wasn't settled in our group whether it was desirable.

_____ : Well it seemed that in our group some people felt that it was quite difficult to practise the common purse without a quite high degree of individuality. Because often when things are shared people stop taking responsibility and you end up that nothing belongs to anybody.

S: Because I think the question of common ownership is also related to the question of friendship. Because if you're really close friends with someone, maybe the idea of individual ownership diminishes. You might want to borrow somebody's jumper, well if she's a very close friend of yours you might not even ask because you know that you're quite free to borrow it, she doesn't mind, she's happy that you borrow it. So to that extent there's common ownership. But somebody else might be a good friend of yours but at the same time you're not such friends that you can just borrow or use her things without asking her. Usually your own common sense will tell you what you can do, how far you can go, depending on the degree of friendship that has been developed. But I think just as for common ownership there needs to be a definite degree of individuality, to make common ownership possible, in the same way for friendship there needs to be a degree of individuality because friendship is a point of relation between individuals. It's not a question of mutual dependence. So it's as though all these things go along together hand in hand in fact. If within a spiritual community there's a high level of individuality on the part of the members that make up that community. Of course it can't be a spiritual community without that, well then there's the possibility of friendship developing, and at the same time the possibility of a higher degree of

common ownership.

But it's true, if you don't get individuality and responsibility and so on well common property is nobody's property. They found that in socialist states, haven't they. Well you find it in England - common property is abused.

Vidyasri: Also we were talking about the benefit of opening out and sharing your things and your possessions and your clothes, and in a way that's good because it opens you out and makes you more open, but Anoma made the point that you can also do that in such a way as to almost lessen individuality - that you kind of can share clothes and everything will become one, sort of thing, which I have seen not so much in the Friends actually but outside of the Friends where people share almost identity. It becomes a group rather than individuals actually being more open.

S: One might say you shouldn't make too much of a point of sharing things. You mentioned sharing clothes, well some people make a point of sharing clothes. To make the point 'well we're the same' in a sort of group sense. Couples sometimes do this, don't they, and it's in that case a negation of individuality. So sharing clothes should be a natural sort of thing, not that you're making a big point by wearing somebody else's jumper. You just happened to need the jumper, so you feel free to wear it. Not that you're deliberately wearing the jumper just to show everybody else how close you are to the person from whom you borrowed it. That is a bit suspect. *[Laughter]* Maybe it's that sort of thing that you are thinking of.

Vidyasri: Yes, that kind of thing.

_____ : The other thing that came up was having to share your group of people. You have to actually also share yourself, you actually have to give yourself.

S: (unclear)

_____ : It seems to me that the Sangha would be a lot stronger to the extent that people did share, because that would also affect their individuality, and I felt if we don't grow into sharing more things then the Sangha wouldn't grow actually.

S: Yes.

_____ : Little pockets of people who will help each other but they're not.... because you can gain the larger numbers but not actually be sharing (unclear)

S: Do people find they've got a sort of feeling to share or do they just like to keep things to themselves? *[Laughter]* (unclear) women's communities, those that live in communities?

_____ : Some things are more sharable than others. *[Laughter]*

Sanghadevi: We've just started at *Vajrachhedika*, we've made a living room and we decided to put our Dharma books in the living room, so that we can all then benefit from going in and reading.

_____ : I don't like people borrowing my clothes and I don't like borrowing other people's clothes. I don't know why but.... There are particular areas. It's not like I'm into clothes. (unclear) trust that other people are going to care for things that aren't theirs. (voices talking at once) I think I might wreck their clothes (unclear)

_____ : Our community has such a small space that we have to share an incredible amount.

It's a very small flat. I have actually withdrawn my shampoo bottle eventually. I realised I was kicking up a lot of fuss about.... *[Laughter]*

S: It is said - I don't know whether this is true or not and here I tread very cautiously on strange ground! - that ladies don't like to share kitchens. Is this true?

_____ : (unclear) *[Laughter]*

_____ : A tiny alley about three foot by one and a half. When we have breakfast in there you all stand up. No one sits down!

Vidyasri: That doesn't seem to be true. Outside the Friends, I know with my mother and her friends and so on, they couldn't bear to share a kitchen because they have their way of doing things, but I've never sort of come across that within the Friends. We all seem quite happy to share a kitchen.

S: I do know personally two very elderly ladies, both of substantial means. They live apart in separate houses and they meet for lunch on I think it's Saturdays and Sundays, they couldn't bear to live together and share the same kitchen. They are very good friends but they have to live apart.

_____ : (unclear)

S: Or don't clear up.

_____ : Or just different standards of what is clearing up. *[Laughter]*

S: Standards of what is cleanliness.

_____ : Do you think if you've experienced friendship or when you experience friendship on a deeper and deeper level you can then experience it more quickly with other people, you know what to look for?

S: I think so, yes. I think if you experience a deeper friendship with one person, your capacity for that kind of friendship is enlarged generally. Yes I do think that. If it is genuine friendship and not just some kind of strong attachment.

_____ : I think that's what I was thinking of earlier when living in a small community, where you got to know a few people really well. That seemed quite a happy occasion and I think now I could actually go into a large community and function better within that. But it seems harder in a very large communities perhaps or larger ones where you've got more people to actually get to know to start with.

S: I think people tend to be a bit afraid of these larger communities. Supposing a community exists of eighteen or twenty people as it does at Padmaloka, I don't think one can be expected to have equally deep friendships with all the people in that community. I think a deep friendship with eighteen people living under the same roof is impossible. I've got Aristotle on my side here! *[Laughter]* That you can't have a - I don't remember the exact expression but it's equivalent to - 'deep friendship' with more than four or five people at the same time. So I think if within say a community of eighteen or twenty, you're on friendly terms with everybody and have got a deep friendship with four or five, I think you're doing very well. I think that is sufficient. I don't think that everybody in the community, if it's a big community, has to be on terms of equally deep friendship with everybody else in the community. I think that is humanly impossible. But nonetheless there are advantages to having a big community - you can have a bigger place, you can

do a greater variety of work, and even when it comes to developing your deeper friendships, you have a wider range of choice.

_____ : The important thing there is that overall everybody in different combinations has got deep friendships.

S: Yes, has several good deep friendships, or, at the very least, one. But I think if one finds oneself in a large or comparatively large community one need not think that one is under an obligation to spend an exactly equal amount of time with each other community member and develop an exactly equal degree of friendship with them. I think this would be a wrong way of looking at it, in the case of that larger community. If there's only three or four or five of you well yes, I think if you don't then develop a roughly equal degree of friendship, well perhaps little jealousies can develop and some people might feel left out and so on, or actually be left out.

_____ : I think the advantage of living with a large number is that even though you're not developing the same deep friendships with everybody, you do have quite a variety of people, so you do learn to meet with people of different types that you might not particularly normally get on with.

S: There are other advantages. Economic advantages with bulk buying and all that sort of thing. Also if one or two people are away it doesn't mean that the community is drastically depleted. If you've only got four or five people, if only two are away on retreat it doesn't really feel as though you've got a community there. Whereas if you've got eighteen or twenty even four or five people can be away, it's still very much a community, even a big community.

_____ : So it all seems to come back to friendships again.

S: Yes. Anyway any further point? Any unresolved point left over.

_____ : When Sariputra makes his declaration and he called it the tradition of the Dharma. And then he said that if you break the five hindrances and apply the four mindfulnesses and cultivate the seven factors of wisdom then you'll attain Enlightenment. Is that the tradition of the Dharma? [Pause]

_____ : You mean that particular combination of things.

_____ : Yes.

S: Well these are all quite important elements of the teaching. 'Those who long ago in the past were Arahants, fully Enlightened Ones, all these exalted ones, having destroyed the five hindrances, impurities of mind which make weak the Insight, having become firmly established in the four applications of mindfulness, and having cultivated according to the truth the seven factors of wisdom, first gain unsurpassed perfect Enlightenment.' It's as though Sariputta is stating the absolute minimum required for the attainment of Supreme Enlightenment. That you must destroy the five hindrances, that you must develop the four 'foundations', as they're also called, of mindfulness, and develop the seven factors of wisdom, the seven *bodhiangas*. If you can do just these things then Enlightenment is assured. It's basically very simple he is saying here, so to speak.

Viv: That's quite a strong impression of this whole thing. That as long as you do so and so then it's a cause and effect thing, the rest will follow.

S: So therefore it's practical.

_____ : I found the beginning of it quite interesting when Sariputra says that he doesn't understand the ways and thoughts of the Buddha's but he knows the traditional Dharma.

S: Yes he knows what you have to do to gain Enlightenment but he doesn't pretend to be able to say exactly what Enlightenment is in full detail. It's easier to explain the path than to elucidate the goal.

_____ : Say again what the four foundations of mindfulness are.

S: That is to say mindfulness of the body and bodily movements; mindfulness feelings and emotions; mindfulness of thoughts, that is to say mindfulness of mental states; and mindfulness of spiritual realities. These were explained in the *Satipattana Sutta* or *Sutta on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, which appears both in the *Digha Nikaya* and in the *Majjhima Nikaya*. In the *Digha* in a longer, in the *Majjhima* in a shorter form. This is one of the *Suttas* we're going to be studying in Tuscany this year, so you'll get to get hold of the tapes.

_____ : I didn't realise it was spiritual realities. I thought it was objects.

S: Well '*Dhammas*'. *Dhammas* mean, if one looks at the actual text it mentions various formulation of the teaching. It mentions for instance the Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path, so mindfulness of *Dhammas* here means mindfulness of, recollection of, or even reflection on, those particular formulations of the teaching which embody the truth as perceived by the Buddha. So it's as it were the contemplation of realities via the contemplation of their doctrinal formulations.

_____ : Could you say in a way the foundations are the application of the four dimensions that.....

S: No, it's a separate enumeration really, though there is a certain amount of overlap. [Pause]

_____ : Another section that seemed quite interesting was that it gives a glimpse of how the Buddha dealt with lay followers.

S: Yes right.

_____ : We've heard so much about the bhikkhus and developing wisdom but the lay people just concentrate on the basic (understanding of the?) *lakshanas*.

S: Yes and mentions arising in a happy heavenly world. The point being you must take people from where you find them, and help them as far along the path as they're prepared to go for the time being.

_____ : Does the morality here refer to the five precepts?

S: Not specifically. It refers to all the moralities mentioned in previous *Suttas*. There's a list of moralities given, especially in the *Brahmajala Sutta*. One has to refer back to that. These lists of moralities recur in all these first discourses of the Buddha.

_____ : Do you think it could mean just a sort of happy, healthy human realm?

S: Yes, one could say that.

_____ : What are *samanas*?

S: Ah, *Samanas* are sort of freelance wanderers who don't follow the *Vedic* tradition.

_____ : So they're not necessarily Buddhist.

S: They're not necessarily Buddhist, no, though the Buddha's followers were drawn mainly from among the *samanas*, but there were non Buddhist *samanas* (unclear). *Samanas* are those who have given up the household life and wander from place to place, who live on alms, and who either look for a teacher or who have a teacher, but do not follow the orthodox *Brahmanical*, *Vedic* tradition. [Pause]

_____ : (unclear) the five hindrances are given in the order that they're given?

S: You mean with *Kamachanda* coming first and so on? I don't know. They always are enumerated in that particular order, there's no doubt. Maybe craving is the most obvious, hatred the next obvious and maybe the others aren't quite so obvious. Hurry and worry, Sloth and Torpor, Doubt. Perhaps they do become a little more recondite as the list proceeds. But yes they are always enumerated in that order, so presumably there is some reason. It just seems to me that maybe it's in the order of the ease with which they can be recognised or frequency of occurrence. *Kamachanda* is always there. You're always wanting something. You're not always angry, and you're sometimes flurried and worried and sometimes overcome by sloth and torpor, but you can't be overcome by both at the same time, you see, so [Laughter] (unclear). Even though you may alternate rather rapidly between them! [Laughter] One in the morning and one in the afternoon and [Laughter]

_____ : Somebody suggested in our group that doubt was when you didn't actually know - that if you didn't know what hindrance it was it was probably doubt.

S: Doubt actually has a more specific meaning. It's not so much doubt in the honest sense that you are genuinely unable to make up your mind or genuinely don't know. It's a sort of unwillingness or reluctance to make up your mind, because that would mean you had to take a definite course of action and you would have perhaps to definitely commit yourself. So you are unwilling to make up your mind. You sort of almost deliberately multiply doubts just to postpone the moment of decision.

_____ : I think what I said at the time was that if somebody is feeling doubt, quite deep doubt about the spiritual path, if you are still seeing the hindrances and looking - is it craving or is it this or is it that - in a sense it's more easy, but you're experiencing a deep doubt about the whole thing you don't even want to look at whether it's a hindrance or.....

S: It's irrelevant because if you don't regard the spiritual path as the spiritual path then the hindrance ceases to be a hindrance. It can just be fun! [Laughter]

_____ : In our group Terttu was asking about how can you recognise what is a hindrance.

S: Well they all come up from time to time. At one time there might be a predominance of one, at another time a predominance of another, but I'm sure they all appear at some time or another.

Karola: I think it's more easy to recognise them during a long period of meditation. That's what I find. You are actually able to say ah this is whatever. (unclear)

S: Except if you're on solitary retreat and you're spending more time in meditation well clearly the hindrances come up from a deeper level and you can see them in their more basic, or even cruder, forms, say for longer periods, because you're not distracted by external things.

Karola: It certainly becomes quite exciting in a way, thinking 'oh, this is it!' [Laughter] (unclear)

_____ : It's not really anything from today's study but yesterday when you were talking about the *dhyanas* and gaining insight and going up through the *dhyanas* and then coming down as it were, I was wondering for people who were more of the faith types, you wouldn't reflect on Dharmic (unclear). Would it be more that they just simply (unclear) chant a mantra.

S: Or reflect on the life of the Buddha.

_____ : But they could still have thought?

S: Yes, there would still be some element of thought.

_____ : The other thing I was wondering was is it absolutely necessary [Laughter] to go right up through the *dhyanas* and [Laughter]

S: The further one goes the more pliable, to use the traditional term, the mind becomes, and therefore more capable of developing insight, but not that you cannot develop any insight unless you've experienced the whole range of the *dhyanas*. That is never said, no. One can develop insight on the basis of a relatively modest experience of the *dhyanas* but there must be some unification of consciousness, some unification of one's energies, to give one's insight the necessary degree of force of penetration.

_____ : On my solitary retreat I felt sometimes that I was in a *dhyanic* state but at the same time I felt quite restless and anxious and things but it really did feel that I was in a *dhyanic* state. Does that mean I wasn't?

S: One can be in a transitional state, just sort of touching the fringes of *dhyana* on one hand but still that particular hindrance of restlessness and flurry hasn't died down. One certainly can't go into full *dhyana*, that is to say the first *dhyana* fully, unless the hindrances have subsided. But one can be in a sort of intermediate state which is called *Upachara samadhi* or 'neighbourhood consciousness', where there is still some vestige of (unclear)

Any final point?

_____ : Are the ten fetters a later formulation of this or is it (unclear)

S: The ten fetters is a quite early formulation. How early it's difficult to say. Perhaps it isn't as ancient as the formula of the biases, perhaps, but I don't like to be very sure about it.

_____ : What about this other group of poisons, which contains envy and doubt?

S: Ah that's a different list. Those are *klesas*. They appear more in the Mahayana and Vajrayana where they're correlated of course with the five (unclear) [Pause]

Anyway time is up, so let's leave it there.

[End of Tape Four Tape Five]

S: All right, then, any questions from either group?

Sanghadevi: We had quite a long discussion in our group about the Four Noble Truths being a

principle, describing a principle, of conditionality, that the fact that the Buddha chose suffering was one particular instance of conditionality, and that we can fall into the trap of thinking that, well that is essentially what the Buddha is saying, that's the Buddhist view of existence: "life is suffering" ...

S: I do go into this in the "*Survey*", don't I?

Sanghadevi: Yes

S: I mention that there are texts where the Buddha speaks of, for instance, nutriment, the arising of nutriment and the way leading to the cessation of nutriment.

_____ : What I don't quite understand, because we went into that as well, and actually there is a bit in the '*Survey*', but it seems to me that, if you translate *dukkha* as "unsatisfactoriness", then it is covering all of conditioned existence anyway.

S: Ah, but there's something to be borne in mind here, which is very important, which is that it is the '*dukkha arya sacca*'. Now what is the significance of '*arya*' here?

_____ : As seen from a higher point of view.

S: Yes, as seen from a higher point of view; as seen especially from a transcendental point of view. From that point of view, all conditioned existence is unsatisfactory in comparison with the transcendental, not that there is no such thing as '*sukha*', no such thing as happiness. Yes, there is plenty of that in this song, but even happiness is unsatisfactory, even mundane happiness is unsatisfactory in the light of the Transcendental itself, so the '*dukkha arya sacca*' does not say that, within conditioned existence, there is no experience that is not painful - it doesn't say that '*dukkha*', in the sense of painful experience, actual painful experience, physical or mental, is absolutely universal, or then that there is no pleasurable experience - it does not say that, but it say that in the ultimate analysis even the most pleasurable mundane experience is unsatisfactory. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: I understand that, but then why, if you are going to substitute other things for unsatisfactoriness, is it still from the same perspective, because I can't see the point of it, of you putting in nutriment...

S: Well, the point of it depends upon people's interest. If you wanted to make people aware of the law or truth of conditionality...

Sanghadevi: ...as applied to...

S: ... and most people can made aware of that through, or in connection with, their actual painful experience. (Pause) I did once say that when people suffer they very often ask the question 'Well, why do I suffer; what's the reason for it; what's the meaning of it?'. But when you're enjoying intense happiness, you don't ask yourself 'Well, why on earth am I feeling happy; what is the reason of it?' That is not a mystery, that is not a problem! It's the suffering, it's the pain that is the problem. Hence, pain, and of course, suffering is more of a point of departure in this sort of way. If you were feeling blissfully happy the whole time, you wouldn't feel that you had a problem on your hands. If you were feeling miserable and unhappy and depressed, you would feel that you had a problem on your hands, and that you had to do something about it. (Pause) So ordinary human suffering is more of a starting point, even though the suffering, the '*dukkha*', with which the first Noble Truth is concerned, is suffering in the widest sense, which includes the unsatisfactoriness even of the most blissful mundane experiences.

Vidyasri: Do you think one can be aware of suffering, without being aware, like the first Noble Truth, without having an awareness of the other three? Can one be aware of suffering, that one is suffering, without having a glimpse of...?

S: I think you can, I think you can. Mmm

Vidyasri: Can you...?

S: It's not a question of being aware of the truth of suffering when you are actually suffering, in the narrower sense. It's a question of being aware of the truth of suffering no less when you are enjoying yourself. That, in a way, is the real test. Not that the enjoyment ceases to be enjoyment, but you see quite clearly its limitations. You see it can't last, you see that it isn't ultimate, even at the very instant that you're enjoying it. But it is a pleasurable experience, nonetheless, as distinct from a painful experience. But pleasurable and painful experiences both are alike, in transcendental perspective: *dukkha*. Not that the pleasurable experience is *dukkha* as pleasurable experience, it's *dukkha* in a more, so to speak, metaphysical sense. The fact that it is *dukkha* does not negate the pleasurable quality of the experience itself. That is quite important: if we misunderstand that, Buddhism appears as a system of unmitigated pessimism, the teaching that there is nothing but suffering in life, and it doesn't teach that at all. Do you ever come across confusions relating to this subject, say, at beginners' classes? Do you?

Vidyasri: Mmm. (Pause) Some of the books have been written as commentaries do treat it in that way.

S: Unfortunately, yes. So you have to be very cautious about making statements like 'Everything is suffering'. That's true only in the transcendental perspective. That's what I call metaphysical suffering, or suffering in the metaphysical sense. It's not true from an ordinary human standpoint. There are plenty of pleasurable experiences in life, which, though they may not be ultimate, are pleasurable while they last, to a great extent. (Pause)

Rachel: I don't know if this is what Vidyasri was saying, but we talked about this, and I was wondering whether you could actually be aware, fully aware, of the fact that you were suffering, whether that's actually pleasure or the fact that you were experiencing *dukkha*, without somehow also having a feeling for the fact that if it wasn't there, you wouldn't be.

S: Well, one can say that you can see a pleasurable experience as *dukkha*, see it, not feel it, only within a transcendental perspective, which, presumably, would embrace all the Four Truths, in principle, at least. Do you see what I mean? (Pause) And you can appreciate that painful experience is painful experience, without any transcendental perspective, but you can't appreciate that pleasurable experience is *dukkha* without a transcendental perspective.

Not that you feel the pleasurable as painful, but you see the limitations of the pleasurable. It's *dukkha* in that sense, that the pleasure that it gives you is not an absolute, unconditioned pleasure, but only a quite relative, limited and transient pleasure. (Pause) And this is quite an important point: I've sort of hammered at it on several occasions, because, as I said, if people don't understand this properly, well, we may unintentionally present Buddhism as a sort of system of unmitigated pessimism, or at least give that sort of impression, however unwillingly. Some modern writers on Buddhism, especially on the Theravada, sort of rather dwelt on this aspect in the wrong kind of way, in such a way as to give rise to this type of view.

_____ : Would you normally translate *dukkha* as 'unsatisfactoriness'?

S: Yes, except that, for instance, in a general way, yes, except that, when you're up against actual painful experiences, whether physical or mental, 'unsatisfactoriness' seems to be (chuckling) a rather weak sort of term. I mean, if you suddenly spill some boiling water on your foot, well, you don't say it was an unsatisfactory experience, do you? (*Laughter*) A painful one! (Pause)

Anoma: Vidyasri mentioned something in our group, - I don't know whether you said it first time - that you'd mentioned something along the lines that we must, get people to see that they are suffering, presumably to get them on the path.

S: Yes, to get them to see things in a transcendental perspective. If someone says: "Oh, I enjoy my job, I've got a happy marriage, etc., etc.", well, there's no point in saying "that is *dukkha*" (*Laughter*), in the sense that "you are mistaken if you think you're enjoying it". No. You do enjoy it, but you must see the limitations of that. You see what I mean? You must say "Well, it's not going to last forever; it is very contingent; there are other even higher possibilities of happiness to be explored. You can't deny the happiness which someone actually experiences - it is happiness as an experience - you can't deny that! But you can certainly point to the possibility of even more satisfactory experience.

Sanghadevi: Would you say that if you really see the limitations of something then you'd actually stop doing it, or...

S: Not necessarily. Well, you might see the limitations of eating (*laughter*); that it can't give you absolute, unconditional happiness, but it might be a pleasurable experience. But you carry on eating. But if you really see its limitations, you're not investing anything in it, emotionally speaking, well, you just enjoy your food and that's that! You think no more about it and you're not over concerned with what you actually eat, provided it's tasty and it's good for you and you don't put on weight! Do you see what I mean? I don't think that life, in the ordinary sense, loses its savour when you see its limitations. If anything the savour is enhanced, because you are no longer trying to get from it what it can't give you. You are just satisfied to enjoy what it can give you. You see what I mean? Without any strain, without any anxiety.

Sanghadevi: I was just thinking of the danger of... I mean do you think there is a danger of... you might think you've seen the limitations...

S: Oh, yes. Well the danger of self-deception is always with us. But there again our spiritual friends may come to our rescue, if we do fall into that trap. And you can also, perhaps, experiment. Just going without something for a while if you think you really have seen its limitations. Just test yourself, whether you can do without it or not. Suppose you say, "well I really do enjoy my food, but I'm not attached to it", all right, have a fast for a few days. See how you feel; put yourself to the test.

_____ : When I've experienced something as unsatisfactory, particularly before I started meditating, my response was to actually put more of myself into the situation, rather than see its limitations. Perhaps that's the difference ...

S: Well, one has to be careful not to dismiss something prematurely. In some cases, perhaps, you do have to explore, or be sure that you have explored something fully ...

Vidyasri: There also seems to be a state in which I've been in the past and it seems a lot of people get into, in which they feel the limitations of something and maybe they experience things as painful, but it's not just that they're having a rough time but they actually really see, that things are

dying and impermanent and everything, but without mettā and without a vision of anything else, and so that's when people seem to end up killing themselves or taking drugs, or whatever, because it seems they've got a glimpse, well, I sort of feel that there's a glimpse of vision in there, that they've got a glimpse of insight, but it doesn't seem to be moving anywhere else.

S: Well, it points to the importance of mettā, doesn't it? It points to the importance of a positive emotional state.

Vidyasri: Mmm, yeah. (Pause)

S: One might even say that 'insight', to use that term, without mettā, is not real insight, because real insight, among other things, is a product, so to speak, of the unification of all one's faculties, or rather the unification of all one's faculties provides the basis for the development of insight. You can't develop on the basis of intellectual understanding. But sometimes that intellectual understanding can become so keen, even though it's divorced from emotions - so keen, that it looks very much like insight - a sort of abortive insight almost, one might say. And on that account, yes, sometimes people do feel the meaninglessness of existence so intensely, they just want to opt out.

_____: Weren't there some of the Buddha's disciples, even, that meditated on death in the cremation grounds, who committed suicide?

S: Yes. I personally know people who committed suicide. I studied one such person quite closely for several years and in his case it seemed that he was quite unable to get in touch with any positive emotion. His mind was very clear, he was very mindful, very self-possessed, had a good mind, very thoughtful, very philosophic, but almost completely devoid of emotion, either positive or negative. I know why it happened. We traced it back one day

Vidyasri: (breaking in) ... had the emotions cut off.

S: But, you know, it was quite strange in a way. He was almost like a sort of friendly automaton. (Laughter) He always behaved in a very correct, friendly sort of way, because he saw objectively that was the right way to behave, but with no feeling.

Vidyasri: And he killed himself?

S: In the end. (Pause)

Vidyasri: So you wouldn't... so that's not really insight, it's more of an intellectual.....

S: It's intellectual more than anything else.

Vidyasri: Yeah. But would you say that sometimes, that same thing which, then, when you are integrated, and you experience mettā, which actually becomes insight.

S: Yes, indeed. Well, together with the mettā. It's the mettā as much as the intellect which is becoming the insight. (Pause) It does seem, that positive emotion really does play an important part in the spiritual life. If you haven't got it, you hardly get anywhere at all, whether within the positive group or within the spiritual community. (Pause)

_____: Bhante, did you say mettā, combined with the intellect ...

S: No. I said earlier on that it was the unification of all one's faculties, that is to say: emotion,

intellect, will, which provides a basis for the development of insight, and then I said, just a little while ago, just a minute ago, that it wasn't so much the intellect which became intuition when combined with mettā, because it was just as much the mettā itself which became insight, as the intellect. You could no more say that insight is the product of intellect than you could say that insight is the product of mettā. It arises on the basis of a unification of them all. In other words I'm trying to guard against giving undue importance to, so to speak, an intellectual understanding, as distinct from positive emotions. (Pause) Mettā has just as big a part to play in the development of insight as understanding.

Very often we straighten out our understanding, long before we've straightened out our emotions. (Pause) It's as though one needs intellectual clarity plus emotional warmth; both to a very high degree, and both unified, and of course, integrated with one's energies. (Long pause)

Sanghadevi: When we were talking about craving we wondered that, at least ... level, whether there was any such thing as a positive craving, say craving for *dhyanic* experiences or craving for enlightenment.

S: I wouldn't use the word 'craving' here. I'd speak simply of strong desire. I'd reserve the word 'craving' for purely negative contexts, in the interests of clarity. (Pause) I think one shouldn't be afraid of using, therefore, the word 'desire' in connection with the spiritual life. One shouldn't sort of have lurking at the back of one's mind a suspicion that, well, desire is only a form of craving, and you can't have craving in a spiritual life and therefore you can't desire anything in the context of the spiritual life. I think one has to guard against that, otherwise it leaves one with the impression that the spiritual life is rather weak and wishy-washy, not involving strong emotions or any of the passions.

Vidyasri: Yes, Sometimes, a few years ago, I've thought, because I remember reading that all desire leads to attachment and therefore you shouldn't kind of bring that kind of emotion into the spiritual life; and I know I've heard other people talking about it, and actually saying "Don't, get into that..."

S: Well, you see, clever people reading about Buddhism say that Buddhism is self contradictory, because Buddhism says you've got to get rid of desire, because desire is the root of suffering, but Buddhism also says you must desire to realise Nirvana, so Buddhism is self-contradictory. But that is not the case. Sometimes I refer to two Pali terms: '*kamachanda*' and '*dhammachanda*'. '*Kamachanda*' is desire for mundane experience, one might say, and '*dhammachanda*' is desire for the Dharma. These two are distinguished. So '*chanda*' is a sort of neutral word which can represent something positive, as well as something, so to speak, negative. But Buddhism, early Buddhism, isn't afraid of desire. And it distinguishes very carefully between '*chanda*' in the sense of '*dhammachanda*' and '*trnsa*', which is 'craving' or 'thirst', which is never used in a positive sense, as far as I can recollect. In Pali it's '*tanha*'. So you can quite unabashedly speak about your desire for enlightenment. There is nothing wrong with that. How else can you speak of it? You can't say "Well, I just have a sort of liking for enlightenment [*Laughter*] - you must go all out for it, and you can't go all out for it unless you desire it. 'Going all out for it' means that you desire it.

Vidyasri: I think where it gets confused with people, is where it becomes grabbing. Because I'm thinking of ordination ...

S: Yes.

Vidyasri: ... like people desiring ordination.

S: But in a way you can't help but grab, because you see something out there as an object, you want it, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, you want to grab it, or you want to appropriate it, perhaps, in a more lady-like fashion! (Laughter) It's the same sort of thing: it's you as a subject reaching out to an object in howsoever crude or refined a way - there's no way round that, so an element of grabbing, I think, is unavoidable. One just has to be aware of the situation. You cannot but not grab, really. So long as you experience yourself as a subject, and the object of your desire as an object. If you could grab enlightenment, well, why not?! But it can't be grabbed, it can't even be taken, it can't even be apprehended, it can't even be touched according to the *Perfection of Wisdom*. It can't even be seen as an object. It isn't an object, really. But don't be afraid of these strong emotive terms.

Again, I don't know how it is among the women, but among the men recently they've been using this word 'passion' quite a lot; speaking in terms of passion for friendship, for instance, and that's a good thing, because it gives the impression that friendship is something involving very strong emotions, it's not just something weak and tepid. It's not a sort of poor relation of love, so to speak. (Pause)

Asokasri: How would you then actually give a definition in English to the difference between 'desire' as distinct from 'craving'?

S: Craving I take to be essentially neurotic. It is a reaching out to something, so as to appropriate it, so as to make it fill a sort of gap, a sort of void within oneself, rather than to help one to evolve or to develop. I'm sure you all know the sort of feeling I mean. (Pause) I mean there is a difference between a healthy desire, say, for food, and having a neurotic craving for it. (Pause)

_____ : So how do you define desire?

S: I think desire is a wish to appropriate and enjoy something, so to speak, for its own sake, but when it's a question of craving, neurotic craving, very often you're wanting to enjoy and appropriate that particular object as a substitute for something else. You see what I mean? You might, for instance, quite naturally, enjoy say sweets; you might desire to have a sweet occasionally. But if you look upon sweets as a sort of substitute for affection, and you feel a great lack of affection in your life, well, then you start sort of swallowing sweets and filling yourself with sweets in a neurotic, craving dominated sort of way: you see the difference? Craving is addictive. Or craving is a form of addiction. There is that book, "*Love and Addiction*" - some of you have read it. I think that's quite useful. So craving is very much akin to addiction.

Anoma: That's why it is quite useful to know, what ... if you are lacking in affection or whatever it is, it is best to know it and then in a way ...

S: Yes. And take steps to provide yourself with it in a proper way.

Anoma: Yes. You're not trying to provide it by eating sweets.

S: Yes, indeed. If you can see love and affection as a sort of objective needs which every healthy human organism needs. (Pause) I think only too often Buddhism comes across or perhaps even we put Buddhism across as something rather weak and polite and genteel and well-mannered, restrained and reserved and all the rest of it.

Anoma: An interesting thing, that, when I came back from my solitary to our regulars' class, I mean, I could see, in a sense, it was a good class, but my response was to be 'naughty', to do something outrageous.

S: What?

Anoma: (Laughter) And I didn't, because I thought it would have been unfair to Ratnavira who was leading the class, but I thought afterwards it was something to do with it feeling a bit staid...

S: Yes.

Anoma: ... and probably it wasn't specially so, or anything, but ...

S: We had a little experience like that recently at Padmaloka. Last week I was with the community - it happened to be a slightly special occasion, a slightly special meal - but there was a visitor from around the LBC who was with us for a few days, so towards the end of the meal, things sort of livened up a bit, I told one or two sort of humorous anecdotes of my earlier life, and this person from the LBC seemed quite taken aback and a bit puzzled by all this, because he was a quite staid sort of person - he was wearing a tie to breakfast, for instance (Laughter) nobody else was. But I think he couldn't quite reconcile our being a bit sort of relaxed, as it were, just joking a bit, with his image of a spiritual community or spiritual life: he thought it a little bit odd. He didn't react strongly or anything like that, but was just a bit puzzled. It was no more than that. But clearly it didn't all quite square with his image of the spiritual community. (Pause) I mean, obviously one mustn't go to the opposite extreme and ... (Laughter) I don't know. To some extent it's people's image of Buddhism itself. To some extent, perhaps it's the English character, or at least the character of many people in the South East of England. (Laughter)

_____ : ... at times, sort of, discussion about the puja and whether, there, we could step up the ritual a bit, use music and... I don't know. I remember when I first did a puja remarking on this kind of sing-song voice that was done, whether there should be more expression, even through the voice, about having feeling or to encourage feeling, and it's quite difficult, because I can see the way the puja is conducted at the moment that it leaves people to individually rise to the occasion, which they I can do. How would you ...

S: I'm personally, again in principle, I am quite in favour of the introduction of music, but I think it is not easy to do. We can't just sort of introduce traditional Tibetan type Buddhist music or Indian music - you can't really just borrow a bit of Bach or Beethoven, however lovely they may be. We've got to evolve something of our own, and that's going to take time and it's going to mean experimentation. I would certainly like to see it happen. I think there's a lot of improvement should be carried out in this particular area. Just to make the whole experience of puja much stronger, more intense, more truly devotional. I think there have been changes, even improvements, in recent years. I think one turning point, almost, was when there was a women's retreat at *Mandarava*, and the women on the retreat did all those offerings from the *Bodhicaryavatara*. I think that was very, very good. I think that was a new development, wasn't it? I don't think it had been done before. You had done it, I think

Anoma: I had done it on that occasion, but Dhammadinna had done it before, some years before.

S: That was also done in Tuscany last year. I don't think the men had done it before. It went down very, very well.

Anoma: I know men, whenever I mentioned doing an offering, there was...(Laughter)

S: They were very much into it in Tuscany. They spent all afternoon preparing the most elaborate offerings - all sorts of models and things. And again it happened locally, quite recently. Quite

imaginative offerings. I think... on Padmasambhava Day, I think on Sangha Day also, but these things are happening, but they is still quite a bit of improvement ...

_____ : I think it's good that we've got the *Last Vandana*, because I've often felt that there's not enough chanting, and I didn't know anything else to chant...

S: But actually people still don't do it quite as it's done in India, when it's done at its best. When it's done at its best, in India, there's a lot of feeling, there is a lot of emotion. It's done really beautifully. We haven't yet reached that point. Unfortunately I'm not very musically gifted, so I can't show how it should be done, but I know, I can tell the difference, and I can only encourage people to do it better. You know, put more into it, more feeling into it.

Anoma: I think the tune does lend itself.

S: The tune very much does lend itself to that because I've heard it so beautifully sung. Not always, but quite often. A lot of feeling. It becomes very melodious then, very rich.

_____ : There's no danger of sort of being carried away by a group feeling in the puja, because...

S: We'll deal with that when that question arises. (Laughter) ... carried away with embarrassment! (Laughter obscures words) ... be carried away ... as part of a group, or individually ... You've never seen anyone get carried away in the puja? (Laughter) I haven't either. (Laughter, voices)

Sanghadevi: Last summer on a mitra event we had a Milarepa puja ... (Loud, excited laughter) ... and there was a song about - I wasn't sure if it was near the mark - some of the offerings. I mean people really did go to town on making the offerings and they'd all connected with the life of Milarepa. People dressed up, well, some people dressed up. (Laughter) But I did sort of feel it had a certain element, well ..

Anoma: It was a bit gross, wasn't it?

_____ : Yeah

S: Milarepa certainly wasn't gross, so any grossness in the offerings would have been contradictory.

_____ : But maybe if we don't give ourselves the opportunity then we must experiment(?).

Anoma: I think it is very important if you're going to have a devotional puja, to build up to it, and I think that that somehow we didn't quite build up to it.

S: Yes, it mustn't be just a mental decision.

Anoma: I think it was a bit. I think it was slightly that on my part, you know: it was a good idea...

S: Well, here again, one sees the importance of preparation.

_____ : I know in Norwich recently on Buddha Day, we did a mandala offering, offering the mandala involving the children, and it was really very successful and we built up to it several weeks before, the fact that the children knew what they were going to make as their offerings, and the adults as well, and spent time at home making them and they came along to the centre for this specific occasion. I think we had about seventeen, eighteen children in the shrine room, and it was a

beautiful feeling, very devotional: the children were really into it.

S: They can do that sort of thing in Norwich, because you have children. The LBC can't produce more than two or three!

_____: I think a lot of people were quite surprised that such an atmosphere did build up in the shrine room with so many children there.

Anoma: I haven't spoken to anyone, I think, who's actually done much in the way of offerings on their own, making offerings and devotional pujas on their own, and I found on my solitary that I spent a lot of time in that way, making the seven offerings, and I got really a lot out of it. And I have found trying to keep that practice up since I've been back quite difficult, because it needs quite a lot of space to do it, but I feel it's quite an important practice for me and maybe other people could ...

S: I know that when we had the preliminary retreat for the people who were going to Tuscany a few weeks ago, there were two of them at least who spent several hours every day re-doing the shrine. And it takes that length of time of you do it properly.

You can't hurry these things. (Pause) Anyway, any other points arising perhaps out of the ... ? (Long pause)

Sanghadevi: I've got a question but it's not to do with retreats, but going on to the next section. Well, it's just, that, well, the incident between the Buddha and Ananda and we spent quite a lot of time discussing, well why was the Buddha vexed at Ananda's question, and what was it that he was trying to communicate to Ananda, and I thought he was trying to throw Ananda back on himself, and to say if you become a Stream Entrant, you will know for yourself. It'll settle the question of rebirth..

S: Well it's as though Ananda just wanted factual information, almost out of curiosity, whereas the Buddha wanted him to understand the principle involved, as the result of his own experience. (Pause) I mean, the Buddha must have got a bit bored, keep having to tell Ananda where someone had been reborn and what his fate was, and he said, "Well, I won't give you a teaching, you can find out these things for yourself!" (Laughter)

Anoma: I was quite surprised that he did in fact tell Ananda where they'd gone, because quite often he doesn't answer those sort of questions, but he did answer his ...

S: "It is not extraordinary that that which is produced of man should die, that you should come to the Tathagata and ask the meaning of each of these (unclear) is a vexation to me." (Laughter)

Sanghadevi: You've never heard of the ... it seems to be the *Ti Ratana Vandana* which is described as being referred to as the mirror of the truth.

S: Yes, I think this is peculiar to this particular passage.

Sanghadevi: So we were wondering, or I was wondering and suggesting to people that it meant that, well, I mean, if you sort of look at the qualities of the Buddha and the Dharma and the Sangha, in a sense they're like a mirror, they reflect reality, so if you can really develop confidence in that, to that extent it seemed to be saying you would become a Stream Entrant; you'd actually gain insight.

S: This is described as a sort of ability to practice by Buddhaghosa in 'The Path of Purity', or 'The Path of Purification', in the form of the "*Buddhamo sati, Dhammano sati, Sanghamo sati*", one of the Ten *Anusatis*. And the Ten *Anusatis* are included in the Forty *Kamatthanas* or supports of meditation. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: That was a bit fast for me. (Laughter)

S: I mean, this suggests that recollection of the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is itself a spiritual practice amounting to a meditation, and therefore can have very profound spiritual effects. Just really reflecting on those qualities, really dwelling on them, really trying to understand what they mean. If one can really practise them, well, that is the equivalent to Stream Entry.

(Break in recording due to technical problems on the session)

Sanghadevi: ... the *Ti Ratana Vandana* ... Stream Entry.

S: There is seminar on it, which should help you a bit, going into the meaning of it more fully than we have. (Pause) But if you think, I mean, the *Ti Ratana Vandana* refers to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, those three terms are really quite important. (Pause)

Anoma: The way the Sangha is described and yet, or particularly in terms of the, what is it, the four pairs of persons who are classes of individuals, I must say that I like the... it includes the Bodhisattvas, but I'm thinking more in terms of the Mahayana...

S: Yes, indeed. This is a little stereotyped. I think I've enlarged this a little; as you say, it shows the Bodhisattvas.

Anoma: Er, I think I'm on dangerous ground. In your translation of the *Ti Ratana Vandana*, you seem to have translated 'Sangha' as 'Brotherhood' ...

S: Yes.

Anoma: ...and, well yesterday, before meditation I read it in English and I just had to say something horrid about the... well, I just prefer to say "Sangha", because saying "Brotherhood" with a bunch of women, well that would be just...

S: Well, right, that's fine, but ...

Anoma: (Interrupting) ... it doesn't fit in to my...

S: ... thinking of the meter.

Anoma: Yes, I know, I know. I didn't change it because of that.

S: If you can find a neutral word, well that's fine.

[End of side one side two]

Anoma: Does 'brotherhood, er, well, does that include sisterhood? (Laughter)

S: I suppose, in principle, yes, I suppose you can say "brother" to a woman.

Anoma: It was just that I thought, er, ...

S: ... (Laughter)

Anoma: I mean, it wouldn't be appropriate to say "sisterhood" instead of "brotherhood", or would it?

S: No, I think historically it wouldn't, sort of, quite fit. At the same time I do see the difficulty. You need a word of three syllables. (Pause) I wanted something like "order" or "community"; I mean, that would do, but there wasn't anything of three syllables.

_____ : I have seen it translated somewhere, I think, as 'community'.

Voices: (Breaking in) Yes, "community".

S: Yes, I translated it as "community" when I translate it as prose, when I have not been constrained by the meter. Yes normally I do translate "sangha" as "spiritual community", not as "brotherhood". (Pause)

Anoma: Just while we're on the subject, there is something I've been wondering about, especially on women's retreats, when it says, "he" (Laughter), whether it's OK to change it to "she" if it's not referring to a specific - I mean if it's obviously referring to a monk, well you can't say "she". But if it's not referring to anybody in particular ...

S: And you don't want to say 'it'!

Anoma: Yes, (Laughter) Is it OK to say "she"?

S: I think it doesn't really matter, if it makes it more relevant to the people who are actually listening.

Anoma: I've felt it does make it much, much more meaningful, but I didn't know what you just thought and ...

S: Provided, of course, that it is clear that it is addressed to women as individuals and not to women just as women, if you see what I mean.

Anoma: Yes.

S: What sort of instances were you thinking of - readings from Milarepa, or ... ?

Anoma: ... like Hakuin's 'Song of Meditation', we had on the last retreat and it's got a lot of "hes" and "hises". Well, when we changed it to "shes" and "hers", it just seemed to mean much more to people, but, as I say, I wasn't sure whether that was considered distorting the scriptures. But it didn't seem to me that it was, in that case. As long as, as you say, it's not particularly, specially because you're a woman, it's just making it more relevant.

S: And you think it does do that?

Anoma: I think it does. And most other people seem to think so.

_____ : When you said so long as it's not referring to... sort of like, you think it's referring to

"women as women"?

S: Well, simply, only to women, without being applicable to men.

_____ : Oh.

S: In other words, it is referring to human beings, but since the human beings actually present are women, you put it in the feminine rather than the masculine form. You see what I mean?

Voices: Mm. (Pause)

_____ : Perhaps you could invent another word.

S: Pardon?

_____ : It would be good to invent another word.

Sanghadevi: I think probably if you hear a reading and it was "she", you would take it, you would be thinking of yourselves first, I mean, i.e. women actually.

Voices: (Commenting)

Sanghadevi: obviously you know that the dharma..... men, but you wouldn't emotionally, I don't think unless... But that seems to be the answer to why when it says "men" all the time, that sometimes, women can almost miss out on certain things because they don't make a direct emotional connection.

Viv: Well, when I hear 'men', referring to 'mankind', I always think of men and women, but I wonder if, when men think of 'men', they think of men and women. That that area, er ... (Laughter)

S: I'd say that men would usually think of men and women. For instance there is this Pali phrase "*deva manussanam*", which is ... "gods and men". I think everybody understands that as meaning "gods and human beings".

Vidyasri: I think they do, but I actually think, because when I hear things as "he" and "men", in a way I'm included, but it's a kind of... personally I find it, I sometimes almost consciously include myself; it's like I do, but there's a sort of "that means me", whereas I actually heard the "Song of Meditation" saying "she", there was like an instant it was me, it came straight to me, somehow, and I wonder if that's the same with men as well, that, in a way, they know it includes women, but I wonder if, actually, when it's always "he" and "men", whether they actually make that direct connection with it being women.

S: I think probably what is more usual when you hear a word like that you think: "This means me"; but you take "me" within a Buddhist context; "me" as an individual. You're not thinking: "This means me because it says "man"". No. You think: "Well, this means me". You don't make the transition from, say, masculine gender to, say, common gender, you think: "Well it just refers to me". Not particularly thinking of yourself as a man as distinct from a woman.

Anoma: Well, that's why I think the value of putting it in 'shes' and 'hers'... it does make it more direct as long as we don't get into thinking that, "Yes, especially you are a woman".

_____ : I wonder if you could use the word "they" sometimes in that sort of circumstance.

Voices: (Jumbled)

S: Sometimes it's artificial. (Pause)

_____ : It's a question of language, because if we translate it into Swedish, in the Swedish language, a human being is "she". You speak about 'man' and the 'male' on the whole, it's 'she'. (Laughter)

S: Have the men protested? (Laughter)

_____ : When they hear 'she', they think, "Well, it's about me".

Voices: Really? (Laughter)

S: You don't have a masculine ... in Swedish?

_____ : I haven't heard of it. (Laughter)

S: In Finnish, though, you have a neutral word.

_____ : It's the same, it's just 'han'. It's both 'she' and 'he', so it doesn't make any difference.

_____ : It's completely separate from 'he' and 'she', the word 'han' is it?

_____ : It's just like 'it'.

S: Is it common gender or neuter gender?

_____ : Both. It sort of contains both

S: Yes. Common gender.

_____ : It does feel strange when there's a group of women and they're doing the Basic Puja and they say "The Buddha was a man as we are men". Somehow it just doesn't ring ...

S: Ah. You'll have to blame the Finns for that, because I did it for them, and I knew that they would chant it ... (Loud laughter drowns words) ... went into general circulation. So I then added an alternative version, didn't I? What was that?

_____ : "Born". The Buddha was born as we were born". (Pause)

Voices: (Conversation between the Finns)

_____ : ... human being?

S: Well, that means 'human being', then. (Laughter) Anyway, how did we get onto that?

Anoma: Through the "brotherhood".

S: I don't see why you couldn't substitute some other term if it's an assembly of women. You might have to sacrifice the meter in those cases. And then there will be a struggle between ...

_____ : And I really like the meter.

S: And then, of course, there is the prose version, which says "the community". I think it is important, making a more general point, that the Puja, or the language of the Puja, does evoke a definite emotional response. That is important: the language shouldn't be sort of neutral. You shouldn't have to think about it to make it applicable to oneself.

Anoma: An interesting thing happened on a women's Order retreat, where we were reading I can't remember which bit of the *Bodhicarya*, and somebody suggested we try putting 'she' instead of 'he', and there was one particular bit that wasn't very complimentary and we realised that, before, we'd kind of thought ... (Loud laughter)

Voices: (Jumbled and excited) ... "Beware of certain sorts of men", when we translated it was like "Beware of certain sorts of women". (Loud laughter) ... We not only missed out on...

S: That "men are wicked". (Laughter) Yes. You have to be honest (chuckling) and ... not leave all the positive bits for the women and all the negative bits for men. That would be cheating. (Laughter) "She will go to hell". (Pause)

Voices: (All speaking at once)

_____ : ... negative aspects really hit you..

S: And that is the main point. You can't escape. If the text says, "He goes to hell", well that sort of leaves you cold. [Laughter] ... the precepts concerning you too! (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Would you say something about the "Path" and the "Fruit", and the use of those two...?

S: Well, this question has plagued quite a number of people. I've dealt with it somewhere.

_____ : There's a short bit in "*The Three Jewels*".

S: I've dealt with it at length somewhere; it must have been one of my seminars. ... Well, anyway, "Path" and "Fruit" on the Transcendental Path corresponds somewhat to "*karma*" and "*karmavipaka*", where "The Round" is concerned. For some reason or other the Theravadins found it necessary to make a distinction between your actual exertion on the Transcendental Path, especially by way of breaking the fetters, and the experience that came to you, the transcendental experience that came to you as a result of that exertion. So the one is called "Path" and the other is called "Fruit". It's misleading, because "Path" is used here in a very specialist sense. In a broader sense, of course, "Path" includes the "Fruit" also; this is where confusion seems to creep in. The Path in the broader sense includes "Path" and "Fruit", but "Path" in the narrow sense means the actual, as it were, transcendental exertion, which brings about the transcendental experience. The one being, as it were, more active, the other being, as it were, more passive, corresponding, as I said, to *karma* and *karmavipaka*. (Pause) I don't think it's altogether a helpful distinction. The Theravada always makes it. And they even distinguish, I mean, the "holy persons", the "*aryapudgalas*" according to that distinction. I mean, there is the "*srotapana*", the one who attains "the Path" is the *srotopana*, and one who has attained "the Fruit", and so on for the (unclear) ... arahant. It doesn't seem really a very necessary distinction to me, but the Theravadins do go into it. Well, not a very helpful distinction, especially as, according to the *Abidharma*, the experience of the Fruit follows instantly upon experience of the Path. (Pause) There's a little article in the

Buddhist dictionary on the *srotapana*. You can look it up sometime ...

Sanghadevi: We've got one at the LBC.

S: Perhaps you can look it up there.

Sanghadevi: Yeah. (Pause)

Trisha Robertson: Bhante, relating to what you were saying about puja (unclear) many people felt that the percentage of people that actually stick after our meditation courses. I'm wondering if...

S: Where is this, generally around centres, or...

Trisha Robertson: Well I can only speak for those around Aryatara but it's a very small percentage of people that keep coming along after they've been for maybe a couple of months or so, and if there are other ways that ... ?

S: Do people generally find this, that pujas tend not to be well attended. Or do you think that pujas are a bit dispensable?

_____: At the LBC Tuesday class they've changed the order of the evening because were going, and put the puja first ... before the Heart Sutra ...

Trisha: Sorry, that wasn't the thing that I was meaning quite ... exploring our own expansion of what we can do in puja, applying that to beginners' meditation courses, or ...

S: I think we very often find with beginners that they fight a bit shy of the puja, so I think it's still the practice that we tend to introduce it to them gently. Is this so? I think there is a difference of opinion about this, even among Order members running centres, whether you should give relative beginners the whole works straight away. Sometimes people say, "Well we are a Buddhist centre, we are teaching Buddhism; why should we be ashamed of it? Why should we hide it in fact? All right, as soon as people come along, let them be exposed to pujas, to the Sevenfold Puja." Others say, "No, you have to consider people's susceptibilities. You have to consider that if they are introduced to a puja straight away, they might react and never come again, so take it slowly and steadily". Others say that. You see what I mean?

Trish: It was more ... Why don't more beginners stick? Could there be more, in basic beginners' courses, not just in pujas, to enrich them, we need to enrich our pujas.

S: Well, again, if one speaks in terms of pujas, it raises the question, well, how will, in fact, beginners react to pujas? You might lose some of them all the more quickly. You see what I mean? If you laid on bigger and better pujas, you might put them off even more.

Sanghadevi: Are you getting at that we can try and introduce something, of what's in the puja, that sort of emotional aspect, into the beginners' class, or actually bringing the puja into the class ...

Trisha: No. More of just an emotional involvement ...

S: I think it isn't easy to involve people emotionally quickly. I think they are quite mistrustful, very often. They don't want to be involved emotionally quickly. They want just to look, and see, and think, and maybe beat a hasty retreat. But I think what is important always is the personal touch, the personal contact, the personal friendliness. I think if anything is going to encourage people to

keep on coming, it's that. And then, of course, it's really incumbent on Order members and mitras also to make a friendly approach. Sometimes it's easier for mitras, because if people see Order members wearing their kesas, they might think it's all official and that sort of thing, so they might fight a bit shy of Order members, so very often the mitra, who looks just like themselves, (laughter) ... conversation. You see what I mean? I think that is probably the most important factor ... I think, I mean, other factors being equal, what is most likely to cause people to come again is the fact that they have experienced something genuinely friendly and alive - I think liveliness attracts people; life attracts people. If the atmosphere is energetic and inspiring, especially young people are attracted by that. They don't mind so much if things are a bit untidy or not, perfectly organised but they like to feel there's life and energy there, something happening, not that it's just all dull and a bit routine-like; and the Order members are a bit tired and they've done it all before. It's the end of the week, and all the rest of it. (Pause) And I think Order members themselves, and even mitras who have been coming along for a long time, need to be careful that every class and every group is a fresh experience; it doesn't just become a repetition of something you've done umpteen times already. If you get that feeling, it does communicate itself, whether you like it or not (Pause) You look as though you are having thoughts.[*Laughter*]

Anoma: I mean, it's a sort of silly question in a way, but just how do you maintain that? I do find that difficult sometimes to - not that I go really staid and done it all before, but I can feel an element of that in me sometimes.

S: I think it is important really to look at the people who are there, and just think well, you've got these people, and some of them are completely new and even those you have seen before, you haven't seen for a week, they're subtly different. You've just got to communicate with these people who are now in front of you. Think of them, rather than of the specific pattern you are going to follow, even if it is exactly the same pattern as last week. But be more aware, more conscious of the people in front of you and your relation to them, your effect upon them, their effect upon you. (Pause) Also, of course, simple things like make sure you arrive properly rested, properly fed, etc., etc.; not tired and hungry, and if you are being supported by another Order member or mitra, or several other people, get together beforehand. I know this is happening around the LBC. I was quite pleased, when I was down at *Sukhavati* the other week, to find, I think it was Sagaramati, gathering people together nearly an hour before the class was due to begin, so that they could talk about things and exchange a few ideas and be ready together for the class at the LBC. (Pause)

_____ : It strikes me as a pity you can't get people on retreats straight away, rather than just a class, because in that context, we had one particular woman on the women's retreat who'd just been to a few beginners' classes and in fact she'd never done a puja, and after the first night she was going to leave and, sort of we did a puja and she reacted really strongly, and a few of us talked to her, and she stayed, and within about three days, she was making elaborate great offerings. (Laughter)

Anoma: It's just so different in that context.

S: Yes. You've got so much more space and time. But you can only sort of convince a relatively new person that they could or maybe even should go on retreat, if you've got to know them and they have a bit of confidence in you. Then there again, the personal approach is so important. Otherwise, if you're a completely unknown person, just push a retreat booking form under her nose well she may not ... (Pause) Do you think this is a question of making classes generally more positive, more friendly, more inspiring?

Sanghadevi: Mm. I think that is a good point - to look at people who are there.

S: Well I'd have thought it was the first thing! (Laughter)

Sanghadevi: Yeah, but I mean you can get bogged down in, sort of the group, perhaps thinking of the class itself. And I remember sort of, well, supporting a beginners' class at the LBC when it used to be a very big class, and it began to get very small, and I think all of us found it quite confusing, because we'd got this idea of how it should be, and yet felt disappointed when we were faced with so few people, that somehow it didn't really help, in a sense ...

S: I read a letter which Manjuvajra had written to Subhuti: he'd advertised some lectures of his in this place in Boston - quite an expensive place - when he turned up there were only three people. Two of them were regular friends, and the other was his girlfriend! [Laughter] And he was so disappointed, he didn't give the talk, but afterwards, he said he reflected perhaps he should have gone ahead and given it to those three people. I think I would have tended to agree with him. You know, just adapt yourself to the situation. I can remember an occasion in London in the very early days, I turned up for a meditation class, there was only one person. Anyway we had our class of two people! I sometimes tell a story I heard in India about a swami, that is to say, a Hindu monk, belonging to the Rama Krishna Mission, who went from Calcutta down to Madras and hired a hall to deliver his lectures and nobody came, not a single soul (laughter), but he said his job was to give the lecture, whether people came, or not - that was ... his job was to give the lecture and now, of course, they've got an enormous centre in Madras, sixty or seventy years later.

So one has to be flexible and not have a rigid idea of what the class is going to be like and what sort of class it's going to be. Just look around and see who you've got (unclear) ... and then they might not have sat cross-legged before. One should be very aware of this and ask them if they are comfortable and, if it's an older person, say, well 'would you rather sit on a chair?'. Sometimes people are shy of asking or saying anything. You have to take the initiative. Sometimes you have to look around and see who is there, what they are likely to be thinking, what they are likely to be feeling. So say someone's fidgeting: well, they're not very comfortable, they need another cushion. As leader of the class, you should be aware of all that; well, that means you've got to look at them and think about their needs. Find out if they've done the practice before. You may not remember all their faces, so just check. Some might have come once or twice a few months earlier. So you sort of acquaint yourself with the class in that sort of way.

Anoma: I found it personally easier to maintain a fresh approach in a beginners' class than in a regulars' class. Because in a beginners' class you have got new people coming along all the time and in a way it's always quite exciting, because you never quite know what's going to happen or what points they're going to bring up, but in the regulars' class, it seems almost harder, because you're used to seeing those people all the time, and therefore you get the danger that you don't see them anew, you fix your ideas of them and the energy level seems to go down quite a bit.

S: I think, in the case of regulars, it is quite important, for Order members especially, to keep up some contact with them outside the class situation. Get to know them individually. Get to know them personally. It's difficult, really.

Voices: (General conversation)

_____ : Well, mitras can do some of it.

S: Yes. Older mitras, that is to say those who have been mitras longer can do quite a lot ... (Pause)
Well, any final questions?

_____ : I would quite like to ask something about birth and rebirth, really. We had quite a

discussion on what is actually reborn. It's obviously not us as a person who's reborn again, it seems to be more of a process, and the strong links that you make in this life do somehow continue.

S: Well, here the Middle Way comes into operation (unclear) a psychological middle way; the middle way between thinking it's a completely new person who is brought into existence and thinking that it's the same old person, so to speak, essentially unchanged. Buddhism posits a sort of continuity and a "stream of consciousness", so to speak, continuing from one life to the other, neither absolutely the same neither absolutely different, just as during our present lifetime. At the end of it you're not the same person that we were at the beginning, nor are we different, because the one has grown out of the other. The one is the continuation of the other. So, similarly with rebirth. It's an extension of that same process, the only difference being that there's a different physical body. You can think in terms of an ever-changing stream of consciousness which is you and not you, linking itself to successive bodies, through which it expresses itself, through which it experiences the external world, but neither the same nor different, that's the sort of key ...

_____ : I've been thinking of it in terms of certain tendencies, ...

S: Well, when one speaks of a "stream", one speaks of "tendencies", because a stream flows; it flows in a certain direction - that is "tendencies". It can flow this way, flow that way, flow up or down. (Pause)

_____ : Is it partly that strong links that have been developed in this lifetime can somehow be maintained ...

S: (Interjecting) Well, this is the general principle, or even one might say, the general Buddhist teaching.

_____ : Which is what? Sorry, I ... the consciousness is reborn...

S: No. That links in maybe one life with other people can persist into future lives. (Pause) So you can even have, sometimes, a group of people who are in contact in successive existences. The *Jataka* stories illustrate this quite well, when one takes them literally. In all these different stories, the Buddha, Ananda, Devadatta, Sariputra, are the beings who, in their last lives were (unclear) In some of the later Jatakas Yashodara pops up again and again (unclear).

_____ : Is your consciousness fully formed? I mean, in a sense, this consciousness comes along with one in the womb.

S: Well, what does one mean by "fully formed"?

_____ : (Laughs and murmurs) I don't know.

S: It's individual ...

_____ : I was just wondering if your mother and father influence that consciousness?

S: Well, they must do, because, in addition to your, so to speak, psychic heredity, via *karma*, there is your biological heredity mediated by the parents. You could say, of course, that the former determines the choice of the latter; but the latter no doubt does exert its own level of independence.

_____ : This description of rebirth suggests an individualised personality.

S: Yes. (Pause) Yes, though not something static and unchanging.

_____ : Right.

S: An individualised stream, one could say.

_____ : Does a personality have characteristics? Is it a character?

S: Yes, one could say that. Sometimes it is said that *karma* is character; what persists is character or characters. Even if the physical body doesn't. (Pause)

_____ : I heard somebody else on the last seminar - something about twins, which I was interested in, because I'm one!

S: Which last seminar?

Anoma: On the last women's seminar

(Voices and laughter)

Anoma: Um, I don't know quite how to explain...

S: Well, another Order member is an identical twin, but he says that his twin is completely different from him in temperament.

_____ : But there must be some reason why two characters end up in the same womb.

S: Interesting thought! Maybe a shortage of wombs. (Laughter) Perhaps one also has to see the (unclear) of their lives. The two twins could even change places, conceivably. (Laughter)

_____ : What do you mean?

S: One could develop the interests of the other, or each could develop the interests of the other in the course of their respective lifetimes. Since they're both quite young, it is a bit premature to draw any conclusions. Except that in this particular case there has been seen ... there is considerable difference between them. (Long pause)

But do you think one feels a sort of special connection with a twin, even greater than that between an ordinary uterine brother and sister?

Anoma: I think the fact that I was born a twin - I've got a twin brother - I seem to see duality very much in terms of masculinity and femininity - that is something which keeps on emerging in the way I see things, and then it occurs to me "Well, I've got a twin brother", and sometimes it seems to be a very strong tendency in my life. I feel I've sort of brought it with me (laughs) and it just seems to be something relevant in the fact that I was actually born - I was in the womb with a masculine being, but I seem to be very reticent about it! (Laughter)

S: And you've been trying to get away from him ever since! (Loud laughter) (Pause) Are you on friendly terms with him?

Anoma: Yeah. He lives in Australia now. (Loud laughter)

S: Is he on friendly terms with you?! (Laughter)

Anoma: I think so.

_____ : Who was born first?

Anoma: He was. (Laughter)

S: That does make it difficult. (Pause) Oh well, better luck next birth. (Laughter)

Anoma: I'm working on it! (Pause)

S: So, perhaps if you've been born as one of two female twins, you have a strong tendency towards feminism.

Voices: Mm! Mm! (Pause)

S: But it is quite a point, especially if it's identical twins, and they look alike but they have completely different characters.

Sanghadevi: There was an article in the Sunday Times supplement, some time ago, about Siamese twins, two women, and they were joined at the head and they've maintained that link and they're about twenty five or twenty six years old, and they are completely, sort of... what one thinks, the other one knows the other one's thinking, and ...

S: Apparently, I did read a study of twins who'd been separated at birth and who had no contact, and it was found that they married at the same age. They were both girls. They even married men with the same name.

Voices: (Murmuring)

S: There are so many extraordinary things like this. As though they'd been sort of 'programmed' in a common sort of way.

_____ : Could you say that that was the same person, almost?

_____ : Same consciousness

S: Well, yes: what is a person? (Laughter) What makes two things the same thing? I suppose you could speak of one mind in two bodies, but what does that mean?

_____ : The consciousness just needs a larger space. (Laughter; pause)

S: It reminds us of the fact that we don't really know yet the precise nature of the relation between the so-called 'body' and the so-called 'mind'. This is why the Buddha doesn't commit himself to saying either that body and mind, or as he says '*rupa*' and '*jiva*' (vitality), are identical or different. It is one of the undeclared topics. (Pause)

_____ : I mean, I have recently been tending to think of consciousness expressing itself through matter; well, the body is an expression of consciousness, and that changing your consciousness will actually affect your body, but it permeates through at a much slower rate, so you could change your state of mind quite rapidly, but your body is still manifesting the effects of past

states of mind.

S: Yes. The body is more subject to the force of inertia. It's less malleable. That's why the Buddha said that it's a worse mistake to mistake the mind for the self -that is to say an unchanging self - than the body, because the mind is so often changing, whereas the body at least remains relatively stable. (Pause) Oh yes, the mind does affect the body. We see it happening all the time, but the body is slow to respond.

_____ : Could one say you can't have a body without having a mind, or you can't have a mind without having a body? (Pause) Some sort of body.

S: Of course this does raise an even more basic question, as to whether one is really justified in distinguishing between them.

Voices: Mm.

S: Blake said that the body is that portion of the soul perceptible to the five senses. I mean, is there, in fact, one neutral reality which from one point of view is a body, from another point of view a mind? That is a supposition ... (Pause) Anyway, we're getting into quite deep water now. (Laughter)

[Gong is sounded]

S: We're saved by the gong. (Pause) All right, let's leave it there.

[End of Tape Five Tape Six]

Sanghadevi: We've finished chapter two and chapter three.

S: Chapter three, or chapter two? Any questions. (Pause)

Viv: We had one early on, it starts at number twelve, in the differences between mindfulness and awareness: are there specific ... ?

S: Well, I would say as we use these terms in English, they're practically synonymous. We speak of the mindfulness of breathing, or awareness of the process of the in-out breathing, and these terms are really interchangeable. Some writers on Buddhism use 'awareness', rather confusingly, to translate '*jnana*'. When one uses 'awareness' to translate '*jnana*', which is synonymous with '*prajna*', it's Transcendental Wisdom, one should really use a capital 'A'. This is 'Awareness' in a quite different sense. This is 'Awareness' of reality, one could say. It is not just awareness of the breath, or body movements, or feelings and emotions. But broadly, yes, the two are really synonymous, in English anyway.

Vidyasri: Is there not another word, that's - '*smriti*', isn't it?

S: '*Smriti*' is the Sanskrit equivalent of '*sati*'.

Vidyasri: Right. And there isn't another word?

S: There is word '*sampajana*', which means something like, well, 'understanding'. Sometimes one speaks of '*sati sampajana*' in Pali. '*Sampajana*' is much more like 'awareness'; sometimes it's translated as 'mindfulness of purpose'. If '*sati*' means awareness of what you are doing, '*sampajana*' means something like awareness of why you are doing it. For instance, you go out for a walk, well,

you are aware of the actual process of walking, you're aware of the stance of your body, the movements of your body, but you're also aware of, you're mindful of, the reason why you've come out: to go to the Post Office. Otherwise if you didn't have that sort of mindfulness you could just walk past the Post Office [*Laughter*] in a dream, having forgotten why you'd come out. (Laughter) Well, this happens all the time, doesn't it. You go to the office for something, and you meet someone there, and then you talk to them, and you come away forgetting why you originally went to the office. This is what happens. So one can distinguish these two aspects of the total mindfulness, mindfulness of what you are doing, and mindfulness of why you are doing it. This is more like 'awareness of purpose'. So this is also an important aspect of mindfulness or awareness. Yes, 'clear comprehension', is the usual translation. '*Sati sampajana*', 'mindfulness' and 'clear comprehension', that is to say clear comprehension of the purpose of the activity in which you are engaged and of which you are mindful.

_____ : Could you clarify 'awareness of mind' and 'awareness of mind objects'?

S: Awareness of mental states usually refers to any sort of mental content, especially those which are not affectively toned. I mean, preceding the awareness of thoughts, of '*citta*', one had awareness of 'feelings', '*vedana*'. So here one would be aware of feelings of pleasure, pain, grief, sorrow, joy, but when one is aware of thoughts, one is just aware of one's mental state and what one is thinking of in a more objective sort of way. Then, when one is aware of '*dhammas*', this is not '*dhammas*' in the more usual sense just of 'mental objects', but awareness of particular doctrinal categories, which are vehicles for the development of Insight. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Is it always ... ? Because I keep getting confused with that and the Abidharma analysis of the objective world into '*dharmas*'.

S: Ah. Yes, well, the word '*dharma*' or '*dhamma*' has got a number of different meanings. You could say, that on this level, you see things in terms of '*dharmas*' because to see them in terms of '*dharmas*', in the Abidharma sense, is to see them according to reality, to see them with insight. The doctrinal categories only assist you in doing that. Do you see what I mean? So the two are not really exclusive. (Pause; loud noise of tumbling objects).

_____ : You're OK? (laughter) Elephant!

S: Indian elephant. [*Laughter*] Heavy! (Pause) So, the categories like the Four Noble Truths and Five Skandhas are '*dharmas*' in a double sense: they're '*dharmas*' in as much as they're doctrinal categories and they're '*dharmas*' in as much as those doctrinal categories reflect reality, which is also, in another sense '*dharma*'. Do you see what I mean?

Voices: Mm. (Pause)

S: Do you find that many technicalities arise out of your study of this particular text?

Sanghadevi: Well, I feel we could get quite stuck in them. There are quite a lot of terms.

_____ : I've found it very, very useful. In some ways, just making me more aware of understanding certain things, you can actually learn this. They are quite useful. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: I have felt with this text not quite sure sometimes how much to get into really looking at the categories in themselves, as so much to get the spirit in which the teaching overall is being given ...

S: Well, you should do both to some extent, but clearly you can dwell so much on the technicalities that you lose sight of the spirit. You shouldn't do that. Also one wants to get through the whole text, so as to have a clear view of the whole thing. (Pause) Sometimes it isn't possible, or at least not very easy, to understand the spirit behind the particular doctrinal formulation without knowing the doctrinal formulation itself with some degree of accuracy first. Before you know the spirit of a thing, you have to know what that thing is, at least structurally. You can't have really an understanding of the spirit of the Four Noble Truths if you don't really know what the Four Noble Truths are. I think, quite often, people want to press on and understand the spirit of something before they've acquainted themselves with the details of which something is the spirit. They want to rush things, which you can't really do. (Pause)

Vidyasri: Mm. I feel that in the five or six years I've studied within the Friends, that I still haven't kind of got some of the details ...

S: The '*suttamaya panna*' has to come first, and then the '*cintamaya panna*'. You can't reflect on something, develop your own independent ideas about it, unless you first of all learn the subject properly, unless you take in a certain amount of information. I mean, sometimes it's quite painful really and comical to hear people expressing all sorts of opinions, even quite dogmatic opinions, on subjects of which they've got the barest smattering of knowledge, especially Buddhism. (Pause) They say things like, "I don't think the Buddha could have said that". And I ask "Well, have you read the Pali Text?" "Well, no, and what are the Pali texts, anyway?" And they are quite convinced the Buddha could not have said this or must have said that. In India you get a lot of that: people there are quite sure the Buddha must have expressed his firm faith in God somewhere in the Buddhist scriptures. [*Laughter*] They don't think it necessary to be able actually to quote a text to that effect, but they know there are many such texts there, somewhere in the Pali Canon. They just know, because they must be there.

_____ : It's equally painful if ...

S: Yes. Mm. In some ways that is even more painful because then you think how much labour has been (unclear).

Vidyasri: I think that from school and college, I could see the limitations of a certain intellectual way of approaching things, and so I felt I wanted to withdraw from that kind of intellectual approach, and it's only been in the last few years I feel that I've actually realised that there is something very important in that, but it was because I could see people missing the point, so then it seemed important to just practise and try and get to the point, but actually you have to try and do that, plus actually study as well. (Long pause)

S: Did you find this material quite straightforward then this morning?

Sanghadevi: Some of it. It's quite interesting seeing Ananda's response to the Buddha's sickness. He almost panics. We had quite a discussion about, well, whether you actually needed leaders in the Sangha. Is it more that you need organisers perhaps, but not leaders.

S: Well, what is a leader? (Pause) What does one mean by a leader?

Sanghadevi: You don't need somebody who's, say, taking responsibility for the Sangha.

S: Because after all, the Sangha consists of individuals and an individual by very definition, is responsible at least for himself. If you have a Sangha of responsible individuals, how can they need a leader in the sense of someone who takes responsibility for them? Because, even if some

members of that Sangha are spiritually more experienced than others, even so, even though other can benefit from their greater experience, it isn't a question of the person with that greater experience actually taking responsibility in the full sense, in the way that an adult takes responsibility for a child. (Pause)

S: But one may of course need organisers. (Pause) One may need someone to distribute the food within the monastic context. Or to check whether there are enough beds and things like that. Or call people together at regular intervals, by banging a gong. All these sort of duties were provided for in the original Indian monastic Sangha. But the person carrying out those sort of duties didn't become a leader.

Vidyasri: But then, there are teachers.

S: There are teachers, yes. For instance in Tibetan monasteries, the bigger monasteries certainly, all the ranks in the hierarchies are duplicated; that is to say you get a teaching abbot and an administrative abbot. Very much like on a retreat: you get a leader of the retreat - we use that term, perhaps unfortunately, and the organiser of the retreat, so the leader being the one who is concerned with, well, let's say the spiritual activities of the retreat as such, and giving personal attention to people from the '*dharmic*' point of view, and the organiser being one who looks after the more practical, material side of things, so that the 'leader', inverted commas, can be free to concentrate on more, sort of spiritual things. Do you see what I mean? So, in Tibetan monasteries there was that sort of set-up. The administrative abbot saw about raising funds for the monastery, getting the roof repaired, all that kind of thing and the teaching abbot concentrated on supervising studies and spiritual practice. The Chinese system was rather different. In the Chinese monasteries, especially the Ch'an monasteries, it seems the abbot was responsible for everything. He had to conduct all the daily services, give the discourses and supervise people's meditation, conduct negotiations with local warlords, raise funds. But it was under the Chinese system, if monks heard that they were going to be elected abbot, they ran away (Laughter) and hid themselves. But, you know...

Anoma: I got the feeling that in the early days when Lokamitra went to India he would have been a bit like that. Having to do lots of different kinds of things.

S: Well, as when things are on a very small scale, very often one person has to do everything, but, as they develop and come to be on a larger scale, then there should be more of a division of responsibility, division of duties. I think very often, chairmen, if they're not careful, get overburdened in this sort of way. So this is why we have say at least a mitra convenor who can fulfil a certain duty for which perhaps the chairman doesn't have time, or not sufficient time. (Pause).

Sanghadevi: When you said people ran away, um...

S: Monks, elderly monks, they just ran away ...

Sanghadevi: Is that what happened with Hui Neng? Is that why he ... ?

S: No, it was a case of (unclear) because he incited a certain amount of enmity, quite innocently, by accepting the patriarchate. (pause) But it means that in order to function without a leader in the ordinary sense, the spiritual community has to be a very finely tuned organism, as it were, with everybody responsive to everybody else's needs and everybody actually taking, accepting and exercising responsibility. Because if some exercise a little less responsibility, others have to exercise a little more to keep things going and then a sort of leadership comes to be exercised, and sometimes those who are exercising less responsibility are the first to criticise other people for

taking on more responsibility and coming to exercise a sort of leadership. And the way to prevent some people becoming leaders is to make sure you fulfil your responsibilities and duties to the full, and then there is nothing left for any leader to do or to take over. (Pause).

As I said, the Order exercises a sort of collective leadership in relation to the rest of the Movement. That seems a highly plausible way of seeing it, as much as the Order members are committed and therefore more experienced and give the general sort of direction in which things move.

_____ : (unclear) is it the case that the spiritual teacher (unclear) social affairs.

S: It varies from place to place and from time to time, but in Tibet, of course, the monasteries occupied an important place in the political life. If by 'social', one means civic, political, then yes, it did exercise (unclear) even leadership one might say. (Pause) But if that is altogether a good thing is, perhaps, a matter of debate.

_____ : Mm. (Pause) I think it's interesting earlier on the Buddha that gave advice to merchants and other people about their social affairs.

S: Yes. It was advice which they were free to accept or reject, and He only gave advice because they came to him and asked for it. [Pause]

Anoma: We had quite a long discussion in our group about this question of them looking after, um... that how with most people there is a tendency to feel that they to want to be looked after, coming from childhood, and that, the importance of being able to be receptive to someone who is more evolved than you, but at the same time you must take full responsibility for yourself. Which just led on to thinking about gurus, in the sense of someone like Bhagwan Rajneesh, who seems to encourage people to sort of surrender to him, not take full responsibility.

S: Mm. People talk about surrender: one hears quite a lot of this sort of talk in India as though it was a quite easy sort of thing to do. I would say it was very doubtful whether perhaps any of the people who follow Rajneesh have really surrendered to him. What does one mean by 'surrender'? If one speaks of 'surrender' in any meaningful sense, it can only mean really the annihilation of your ego, so to speak, so that some higher power, so to speak again, takes over, and directs you, in this case, presumably the current guru, but, this is an incredibly difficult thing to achieve. So usually 'surrender' means 'submission', a sort of giving in, subordinating oneself, and very often it's a sort of unconscious bargain: "All right I give in to you; I'll submit myself to you. Well, you'll give me such-and-such or I'll get such-and-such", but sooner or later on, they'd be disappointed, and then a sort of reaction sets in. (Pause) I, personally, am inclined to think that this whole idea - or if you like, ideal - of surrender, even understanding it in the full total sense, to another human being, is quite wrong. I'm not saying that 'surrender' is wrong, I think 'surrender' should be to a spiritual principle, or a spiritual personality on the archetypal plane, a Buddha or Bodhisattva, but not to another human being. I think if one does that, or tries to do that or advises anyone to do that, all sorts of difficulties and complications will arise. (Pause). I mean, "Going for Refuge", in a sense, means surrender. You surrender yourself to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

So 'surrender' doesn't really mean placing your will, your unregenerate will at the disposal of another unregenerate will. Because usually it's just a sort of bargain. I was thinking that Rajneesh represents an unregenerate will: I don't really see any signs of anything more than that.

_____ : ... "unregenerate will"?

S: Not spiritually transformed. Not spiritually evolved. The so-called 'surrender' is what we call "a

sprat to catch a mackerel".

Voices: A what?

S: "A sprat to catch a mackerel". Haven't you heard that expression? You know what a sprat is don't you?

Voice: A tiny fish.

S: A little fish. So you just bait your hook with a little fish to catch a bigger fish, i.e. a mackerel. So you give up the small thing to gain something bigger. So your so-called 'surrender' is often like that. You give in to someone so as to get them to do what you want them to. But 'surrender' is not an easy thing to do. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Would you say that the bhikkhus that actually lived at the time of the Buddha though, that when they went for refuge, in a sense, well, in a sense, they were going for refuge to the Buddha, which in one sense was in a human

S: Yes. Though again one finds passages in which the Buddha strongly discourages personal attachment to him, as in the case of one of the monks who was gazing at him and following after him. The Buddha didn't encourage that. He made the point that the physical presence of the Buddha should be distinguished from the spiritual realisation, from the Dharma which he had realised, and one's devotion should be directed primarily to the Dharma, which the Buddha admittedly embodied, but not to the accidents of his personality. That's always been the traditional Buddhist view. In Tibetan Buddhism, there is great faith and devotion shown to the guru, but to the guru as the embodiment of, or at least the symbol of, certain spiritual qualities and spiritual principles. Not just the ordinary sort of day-to-day personality.

_____ : If the Buddha dies you then don't have that reminder, so are you saying that you could feel sorry (unclear) ...

S: Mm. It is said at the time of the Parinirvana - you might find it in this text - that those who were arahants were not disturbed by the Buddha's Parinirvana, by his apparent death, but those who were not arahants, were. Because the arahants were in touch with that spiritual principle which made the Buddha the Buddha, so they had not lost anything, they were not conscious of any loss. The situation wasn't any different for them: what the Buddha had realised, they, by following in his footsteps, had realised for themselves. In a sense, they were the Buddha. They hadn't lost the Buddha. They might have lost some particular human embodiment of that Buddha principle, but the Buddha principle itself was still with them in their own experience, their own realisation, so they were not moved. They could see the sun and that sun, say, was reflected in a number of buckets of water; even if one bucket of water was taken away so that the sun was no longer reflected in the water of that particular bucket, they could still see the sun. They could still see it reflected in their own particular bucket. (Laughter) And there were other buckets too. So what difference did it really make if it ceased to be reflected in one particular bucket, even though it was the biggest bucket! (Laughter) Do you see what I mean?

_____ : It wasn't the sun itself.

S: It wasn't the sun itself. Well, in a sense it was the sun itself but, again, only as a reflection. I mean, it's a very rough analogy but you get the point.

Anoma: It's gives me a feeling that one must guard against on a lower level, but if you are leading

a retreat or something, people can respond to you...

S: Well, they can even fall in love with you.

Anoma: Yeah. (Laughter)

S: It can go to that extent. You have to be very careful you don't get intoxicated with that sort of thing. Because you're right up front. All eyes are upon you, you're leading everything, and chanting so beautifully and melodiously, and looking so pious and holy (Laughter)

_____ : Were the Bodhisattvas moved, the Bodhisattvas as opposed to arahants?

S: They are not actually mentioned because the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* is a Theravada-cum-Hinayana work, and the Bodhisattva Ideal, so to speak, is not recognised, or, perhaps, in a sense, hasn't developed yet. The Bodhisattvas, had they been present, no doubt, would not have been moved because they would have been contemplating the *Sambhogakaya* Buddha. (Pause) The Bodhisattvas essentially occupy a realm where the Buddha never dies, because they occupy a realm in the centre of which is the *Sambhogakaya* Buddha in one form or another. Anyway, that's going off into the Mahayana.

_____ : We nearly did that this morning!

Vidyasri: It really struck me here that the Buddha, that the whole teaching of the Buddha, is for people to be "lamps unto themselves", for them to not need him, for them to be able to stand on their own, and how easy it is, or how much one likes to feel needed, um...

S: Needed? By other people?

Vidyasri: Yes. To feel needed by other people. If one doesn't need people, then one often likes to be needed by people. But the whole teaching of the Buddha is completely away from that: it's for everybody to not need.

S: Why do you think people like to be needed by other people?

Vidyasri: Because it gives you a sense of identity. It makes you feel that you are somebody, that you have a function ...

S: It gives you a function and a role with which you can proceed to identify. So really it's based on an inadequate experience of oneself.

_____ : You need to fill the need in yourself you need to believe in yourself.

S: Well you need someone to believe in you before you can believe in yourself, almost. You can't really feel you are wonderful - you need someone to tell you that. (Pause) It reminds me a bit of Murray's criticism of D.H.Lawrence: he wanted to be independent but he wanted someone to tell him that he was independent (Laughter), otherwise he couldn't feel he was independent! That's a very terrible sort of situation to be in. (Pause)

Anoma: The question of being indispensable came up out of talking about being needed. It seems to me that if you can imagine things going on without you, they seem to be perfectly all right, then in a way, you can give more to the situation, than if you think "Oh, if I'm gone, it's all gong to fall to pieces", and it leaves you freer to give, if you don't feel that if you don't give, everything is going

to fall apart.

S: Well, because giving becomes more of a free choice. I was reading a discussion about this sort of thing recently, which was quite interesting; I forget where I came across it, but it was really quite apt. The first time you did something it was a free action but if you were expected to repeat the action then it ceased to be a free choice on your part, and you became less and less willing to perform the action, even perhaps, eventually resenting. The example which was given was: supposing someone asked you for some money and you were quite happy to give that person this month, say, but next month that person comes again thinking that, well, you gave them last time and therefore surely you'll give again this month; in fact thinking that having given once you're of under a sort of obligation to give again. So when the person comes to you the second time you feel that he feels that you are under an obligation to give again, because you gave the first time. You give but a bit less willingly, because it's not spontaneous, it's not a matter of free choice. Perhaps he comes the next month, and the next. After a few months may even try to avoid that person. You may even start becoming quite resentful, because the giving is no longer an expression of your free choice. You start feeling imposed upon, and I think one could get into this sort of situation in all sorts of ways.

Vidyasri: Within Co-ops, within Centres...

S: Yes.

Vidyasri: ... all the time, sort of expecting things from people and not allowing them the choice to give or not give.

Anoma: But then also if you, say, commit yourself to a Centre or Co-op, or something for a period of time, in a sense, you are saying you're going to try and give...

S: Yes. That is a different thing. The discussion I was referring to was about when someone just gives, is happy to give just once, but in giving even that just once raises a sort of expectation. And that sometimes one can't help doing that.

_____ : I was going to say how can you get round that?

S: Yes. I mean, if you are the one who always volunteers, well people will start expecting you to volunteer, or start thinking it's your duty to volunteer because you've always done that. It's your duty to make the tea, because you always do. And you start becoming resentful, because as I said, you might have been quite happy to do that particular thing just once but you're not happy to be expected to do it regularly.

Vidyasri: I find that in friendships as well, that if I choose to go and see somebody, then I don't like that person to expect me to always go and see them because it makes me not want to go and see them, because I feel I'm being forced into a certain position.

S: I think one has to be very careful of that, because the feeling to do something should constantly renew itself naturally. Not sort of feel that it's being forced to conform to a sort of pattern of expectation which has been set up.

Anoma: You get that happening in relationships, if you are working together on something - certain people might be good at certain things, or provide certain qualities, and, if you're not careful, you expect them to provide those certain qualities every time, you know, say in a Council meeting or something and you can expect yourself to do something.

S: Yes. Someone always takes the minutes.

Anoma: Yes, but even not such obvious things as that.

Vidyasri: Sort of peacemaker, or...

Anoma: Yes, like certain roles in a way: because you made the peace one time, you expected to do that next time. Or because you always speed things up when it's getting a bit slow. Or whatever. You can find you're all kind of relying on...

S: Yes, well, in other words, other people in that particular respect have abdicated their own responsibility. Just because you have, apparently, more of a knack when it comes to that sort of thing, than they have, or than they think they have.

Vidyasri: It's the reactive mind, isn't it? It's not being creative in the situation. It's the tendency to form habits and then for things to just happen in the same ...

S: Also it means that sometimes one hasn't got the self-confidence; supposing like in the original instance I gave, someone comes to you a second time and asks for help the second month, well, you should really ask yourself, "Do I really want to give; can I really see this request as a new request; or am I just unwilling to give again? Do I really think, perhaps, that I've done my bit, I've given enough. They should go and ask somebody else. If I do, I'll say, "No, I'm sorry, this month I can't." Full stop. But if you sort of give reluctantly, you increase the expectation, you therefore increase the likelihood that that person will come a third time, you also increase your own reluctance to give. In the end there may be an explosion. Or you may just avoid the issue and have a bad conscience about it. (Pause) So one really has to ask oneself on all of these occasions, what this feeling actually is and be honest about it, and not allow oneself to be pressured into something. If you do end up by giving even a second, even a third time, even a hundred times, let it be a natural, as it were, full-blooded giving each time, because you've made up your mind on that occasion, that yes, taking all the circumstances into consideration, you will give and you want to give.

Anoma: So even in the circumstances, I mean, if you see that you're fulfilling a certain role, or whatever, and you see that, and you think, well okay, "I can see I can do that, I don't mind doing it."

S: Yes. But do it wholeheartedly, accept it fully. Not sort of give way grudgingly: "All right, I'll do it again."

Viv: What if it's a situation where the person who is asking you something has a need which is quite obvious, but you actually don't really want to fulfil that need and you can't actually see where else that need is going to be met?

S: Well, you're going to experience great conflict then. (Laughter) All you have to know is whether his need that you should give is greater than your need that you should not give. Whichever need is stronger - or your guilty conscience (Laughter) will presumably win out in the end, after a struggle. Sometimes you might feel intensely resentful being put into these sort of situations; you may not want to have to make such a choice.

Vidyasri: We all felt very struck at how human... that it... although the Buddha was about to pass into *Parinibbana*, this passage just seemed very touching, and very human, and it seemed to really bring out the fact that the Buddha was also a human being, he had a human body, and Ananda sort of responding in a very kind of human way.

S: Yes, I remember one of my own teachers, I think it was Bhikshu Jagdash Kashyap, with whom I studied Pali in Benares in 1949, told me that one of the things that influenced him most to become a Buddhist - because formerly he was a Hindu, a Hindu sadhu/pandit, a 'sanyassin' - was a passage in the Pali Canon where the Buddha had remarked to Sariputra that his back ached and he therefore asked Sariputra to go on talking to the bhikkhus while he lay down and rested. And he said this really struck him that the Buddha was a human being; because Hindu gods and goddesses and heroes and Avatars, they just don't have any human weaknesses, and it was such a contrast. It really struck him that the Buddha said, well, "My back aches". He said that really upset his whole way of thinking that an enlightened person could say, well, "My back aches". So he was a human being, at the same time an enlightened human being, so therefore a human being could become enlightened.

Vidyasri: Yes.

S: It wasn't just a question of an "avatara" coming down to earth, and everyone believes in him and prays to him and is then saved. I mean, a Buddha is not a "superman" in that sort of sense. (Pause)

Vidyasri: Yeah. It seems very important somehow to kind of marry the human and the transcendental; that it's not just kind of all up there.

S: Yes.

Viv: Didn't that bring up something about the body and the mind ...

[End of side one side two]

S: ... "all too human", if you know what that means, using Nietzsche's phrase.

_____ : Can you say that again?

S: We have to remember the Buddha was human, yes, but the Buddha was not "human, all too human". I mean, sometimes people can sentimentalise this sort of thing. I remember when I came back from India in '64; I was staying at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. It was quite awful in this respect because if you said, for instance, just to give you an example, you - say a Bhikkhu - said in reply something like he quite liked two teaspoonfuls of sugar in your tea, and an elderly lady would say, "Ah, he likes two teaspoonfuls of sugar in his tea. He's only human you know, my dear! (Laughter) He's got his little weaknesses". They would love to think you've got your little weaknesses, so that's what I mean by being "human, all too human". So the Buddha was human, but not "human, all too human". You mustn't sentimentalise over the Buddha's aching back, or anything like that. It's just a statement of fact.

Anoma: I remember I was on a retreat once; somebody saw Dhammadinna putting white sugar in her tea and was really shocked. (Laughter) 'Dhammadinna, I thought you were perfect!' (Laughter)

S: The assumption being, of course, that white sugar in one's tea was a neurotic indulgence. I think it is actually. (Loud laughter). I'm also surprised that Dhammadinna took white sugar in her tea. I thought that she was perfect. (Laughter). If you see what I mean?!

Anoma: Do you really think it is a neurotic indulgence? (Laughter).

S: I think... well, I won't be absolutely categorical about it. I think it's more likely to be than not. The same way with smoking for instance.

_____ : What about brown sugar? (Loud laughter)

S: That depends, because I'm told there are two different kinds of brown sugar; one is brown sugar which is white sugar dyed, and the other is the genuine article.

Anoma: But surely having sugar at all. I mean, you're talking about the neurotic element, I mean the sweetness and ...

S: I think probably there is. It could be, I mean, sugar is a sort of instant source of well, energy, let's say, so occasionally you may need that, but I don't think anybody should be constantly eating sweets.

Vidyasri: But it's habit in a way, because it's like, if you...

S: Well, habit can be broken.

Vidyasri: Yes it can, but in a way I don't see the point in breaking it. (Loud laughter).

S: Well a habit is harmful!

Vidyasri: Well, in what way? Because if I was fat, then I could say, well, "Yes" to stop eating sugar".

S: Well maybe you need sugar.

Vidyasri: No, it's not that I need it, but I'm not fat, so I don't have to stop eating sugar because I want to lose weight, because I don't need to lose weight. I don't feel unhealthy, so if somebody could convince me of a reason why it would be sensible to stop then I would stop. But in a way I like eating it.

S: There is a book, I believe, which is... what's it called?

_____ : 'The Saccharin Debate'.

S: No. "White Death", is it? (Laughter). I think one has to examine all these sort of little habits, because I remember some years ago I gave up sugar in tea. I came to the conclusion it wasn't a good thing. I'd been taking sugar in tea all my life, since I was a baby, certainly in India and I hadn't thought about it there, it was so much the custom, but due to prompting on the part of some of my friends back in England, I felt well perhaps one shouldn't take sugar in my tea. So I came to the conclusion one shouldn't.

Vidyasri: What was your reason?

S: Well, I forget, in a way, because I heard all the reasons and accepted them, I can't remember what all the reasons were, but broadly speaking it wasn't good for one, either physically or even perhaps mentally. So, anyway, why I mentioned it was because I think in a way my experience was quite interesting, because if you've been accustomed, if the body has been accustomed to some particular substance for, well, in my case going on then for nearly fifty years, well surely there's going to be some change, or some reaction when you stop taking that particular substance. So I found I had sort of withdrawal symptoms, physical withdrawal symptoms, and they lasted for about two weeks, but after two weeks they just stopped and that was that. So I don't take sugar. But I also

find that sugar is being put in a lot of things. Apparently almost all tinned vegetables nowadays have sugar in them and the manufacturers, or producers, they deliberately introduce this saccharine element to get you a bit hooked on that particular product so that they can sell more of it, so clearly it is a bit addictive. Either for physiological reasons or perhaps psychological reasons, or a combination of both. So this sort of surreptitious introduction of sugar, sort of saccharine in one's food is really quite bad, it's really quite immoral (unclear) It's not good for you ... (Pause).

_____ : (Whispering) I've put sugar in coffee.

_____ : Sorry, and I've cooked your vegetables with sugar. (Loud laughter)

S: ... I probably felt those particular peas were especially delicious! I felt they must have come straight out of the garden, untouched by human hand! [Pause] But children eat a lot of sweets, don't they? And it's not really very good for them. Yes, maybe children do need a bit of extra sugar, but not as much as they actually get. (Pause) Sweets are used as a sort of psychological dummy, to keep children quiet. I think also it develops a habit of looking for something pleasurable outside oneself. So you feel a bit sort of, well, not quite happy and so you have a chocolate bar or something like that.

_____ : I actually find it stops me feeling what I am feeling (unclear) ... do it and I actually realise what possibly that I was (unclear)...

S: If you think of the enormous quantity of sweets and chocolate that are consumed by children and adults, I gather more perhaps by women than by men. Well, men have got their pipes I suppose. So I think one needs to scrutinise (unclear) that one has not some little neurotic habit which has survived over the years, and you've got so used to them that you no longer understand or realise what really they are. (Pause) I mean, alcohol is a bit like that, especially if you regularly take it every day you become dependent on it. (Pause) In India, unfortunately, one sees people becoming dependent on their transistor sets, which, of course, they didn't have twenty years ago. Now they can't go anywhere without this wretched transistor set in their ear, listening to some cheap film music. They play all the time.

Vidyasri: Even in London now, you see loads of people walking around with these ear-phones.

S: I've seen people on motor bikes even.

Vidyasri: I think it's terrible! It seems awful alienation from your surroundings, that you're going along on your bicycle, even if it's Mozart playing, it still seems...

S: Bus drivers listening to Mozart.

Sanghadevi: Apparently they do advise you when they sell them in the shops, not to use them when you drive and cycle around because it is actually harmful. But people do, though.

Vidyasri: And people in the Friends, I've seen some people in the Friends do it, and that seems terrible.

S: On their bicycle?

Vidyasri: Yeah.

S: Oh dear! Not listening to my tapes I hope! (Loud laughter) ... responsible for any motor accident

and general unmindfulness. Someone told me he did listen to tapes of mine when driving to work in the morning: I wasn't too happy about that. He said he didn't have any other time to listen to them.

Sanghadevi: Yeah. It's trying to do two things at the same time.

S: Yes, yes. I really dislike this whole idea of background music, or "muzak", or whatever you call it, especially when it's some classical composer to whom you should be giving your whole attention. (Pause) We should be trying to do fewer things at the same time, not more things at the same time. (Pause) You get into a dreadful distracted state, never doing just one thing at a time.

Anoma: It seems to be thought of as quite an achievement, to be able to do things at the same time: the dentist I go to, he was being very efficient: he was trying to drill my teeth and fill in a form and talk to the next patient at the same time (Laughter) and he seemed to be doing them quite well but I felt it was almost an achievement, you know, terribly professional to be able to do all these things at the same time.

S: Sounds terribly unprofessional.

_____ : One of the guys in the class was playing the tapes driving over from Wales to college, and he actually said it was really good because he would just drive, sort of having these thoughts; his mind wasn't wandering everywhere, and in his particular case that helped him to really think about something worth thinking about and keeping ...

S: It depends how good a driver you are, I suppose. Some drivers say they sort of drive automatically and can give their mind to something else. Well if you can genuinely do that, fair enough, but if your mind is now on the tape, now on the musing, now on the road, and back again to the tape ...

Anoma: It seems to be why should people think that's a worthwhile achievement to do lots of things at the same time?

S: I think being busy is a sort of ideal, in a way: your being busy, well, in a way, you're important, your life is meaningful, your life is significant. You've got lots and lots of things to do. You know, like the business executive with four or five phones on his desk all unnecessary, all ringing at the same time, (Laughter) creating an illusion of activity and therefore importance. Perhaps you can even find some Order members like that, scuttling hither and thither, backward and forwards. I'm sometimes quite amused when I'm down in London and I look out from the balcony and see Order members scuttling back and forth, sometimes fifteen, twenty times a day, almost, it seems. I think, "Well, what are they doing?" (Loud laughter) Going backwards and forwards, they always seem to be in a hurry, and going somewhere. I mean, is it really necessary to pop up and down the road so many times a day?

Vidyasri: Well, it's catching as well (Laughter) It's London. London has that atmosphere and it's very catching. And when other people are like that, I get into being like that as well.

S: It happens even at Padmaloka if you aren't careful, someone is driving into Norwich three times in a day, even. It seems to be quite unnecessary. You could have done it in one with a bit of thought and could have done all those little jobs at the same time, but no, sometimes (unclear) three times in one day ...

_____ : Yeah. I think it's just lack of being organised, lack of mindfulness.

S: I think also, it's welcoming distraction. I mean if you are very busy and moving around, well, you are doing a lot, and that gives you a sort of ... that you are doing a lot, that you are busy, that you're important, that your time is being occupied. (Pause).

Sridevi: And if you can do it you can get into feeling that you're controlling your little world, a sense of power.

Anoma: Does this mean then, that if you're in touch with that it's not skilful to do that, you've got to be quite strong not to get caught up in it, not to feel guilty because you're not rushing (Laughs) round in that kind of way. (Pause)

S: Well, it's good to be busy, it's good to be occupied and do things which are worthwhile, but not just to sort of flap around creating the illusion of being busy, fooling oneself and perhaps fooling other people.

Anoma: Sometimes it's occurred to me - somebody like that, and you're trying to communicate with them and make some contact, but they're so busy putting up their shelves and running around that you can't even... you can't sort of speak to them even; you know, they won't even stop to look at you, and then I sort of wonder how important really is putting up the shelves, or whatever it is, compared with at least making some sort of human contact, because people can get completely alienated, completely out of contact with other people, rushing around doing things.

S: Yeah. Even when they are genuinely busy, genuinely doing something worthwhile, even then they can get out of contact with other people if they are not careful. (Pause)

Vidyasri: But I feel, I also have to say that if I want to do something I'm going to sort of do it, and not stop and talk sometimes; I mean, you can do that in such a way that you're not actually cutting off.

S: It depends what you are doing. Some things need a lot of concentration: you can't afford to be interrupted every ten minutes, but that means you must organise your day, organise your time, so that you are able to spend time solely with other people.

Vidyasri: Because I know I've sometimes felt guilty if I haven't sort of stopped and acknowledged everybody I passed, and said "Hello", and I just can't actually accept the LBC when there are so many people. You can't do that, you can't cope with that; you have to sometimes actually try and keep yourself contained.

S: That's true, but at the same time one does have to be careful it doesn't become such a habit you never stop to talk, so to speak, to anybody.

Karola: Well, I think you can. I think you can sort of acknowledge them by just sort of smiling at them. Just that sort of contact. You don't have to actually stop and talk. Because if you do that, sort of, then you have a responsibility to actually engage in some sort of communication: you're not really giving them any attention, so I think there's ...

S: Just wave.

_____: Yes.

S: You acknowledge them but it's understood that you are busy with something else. But sometimes you might be so immersed in your own thoughts you haven't even noticed they have

passed by, and then they might even think you've ignored them. Sometimes that happens. (Pause) Anyway we've strayed away a little from whatever the point was, so perhaps we can go back to whatever it was. If there is a point to go back to, that is, if we haven't covered all the points.

Sridevi: What about the Sangha? I wonder if you could say a bit about the *Aryasangha* and the *Mahasangha*. I find some difficulty explaining to beginners when they ask.

S: Well, *Aryasangha* are all those who are on the Transcendental Path. One can think of them as Bodhisattvas, one can think of them as Stream Entrants and so on up to Arahants, but all those who are past the point of no return make up the *Aryasangha*. One might say the permanent spiritual community; the Transcendental community. But the spiritual community, the term 'spiritual community' can be used quite loosely to include those who are on the Transcendental Path as well as those who are not on the Transcendental Path, even though effectively committed. But the *Mahasangha* means the spiritual community of all those who are committed, whether 'effectively' or 'really' committed, to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, regardless of their particular lifestyle, so to speak. They may be monks, nuns, lay people and so on, but they altogether make up the *Mahasangha*. They are spiritually committed whether they are on the Transcendental Path or not: that's the *Mahasangha*.

Viv: At beginning of Chapter Three, it mentions the eight positions of (cough) or state of deliverance.

S: Yes. As in the *Mahanidana Suttanta* 35. One could look those up. They are the '*vimoksas*' which to some extent overlap the '*vijnanas*', but only to some extent: it's a rather different approach. Quite an interesting approach. Maybe those who are interested could look up those.

Sanghadevi: Is that like, in the *Digha Nikaya* or *Majjhima Nikaya*, or is it actually in that... I was trying to find it here, and I didn't know where to look.

S: *Mahanidana Suttanta*? That should be... No, it can't be the *Digha Nikaya*, because there are only 32, so it must be the *Majjhima Nikaya*. (Pause) If one looks up '*vimokka*' in that Buddhist dictionary ... '*vimokka*' or '*vimoksa*' ...

Sanghadevi: What's that in English?

S: 'The deliverances'. Incidentally, this is something I've been mentioning recently. One must get into the habit of looking things up, in lists of contents, or indexes. I think people don't do this sufficiently - look things up in dictionaries, look things up in encyclopedias, and works of reference, and also the *suttas* themselves - follow things through. Especially if you're preparing a talk, it's useful to know how to do these things. (Pause) I mean, people I think don't know how to go about it, very often. For instance, someone asked me where he could find information about Padmasambhava, so I said - well, I didn't actually tell him, I said - "What you have to do is this: you look at all those books on Tibetan Buddhism; you just go through the index of each book under Padmasambhava and then turn up the references and read. That's what you have to do. (Laughter) He wanted me to take the book and find out a passage (unclear) (Laughter) One should be able to find out this sort of information for oneself. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: I do sometimes feel that about the Pali *Suttas*; I'm a bit bewildered as to where to look.

S: Well, I think initially, one just has to read through them all to get an idea of what is there ... and then know, subsequently, what to look up in the index, and how to look it up. (Pause) If you want,

for instance, to find out about Mara, well look it up in the index: 'Mara'. If there's a Buddhist encyclopedia or dictionary, look up the entry under 'Mara': that will give you further references which you can then follow up. That's the way to go about it. Not just to expect someone to spoon feed you with information all the time. (Long pause)

Sanghadevi: It does seem to me that - well, I see it in myself and I see it in other people - that we still suffer, a lot of us do suffer from our past experience of education and it is difficult to actually...

S: Well that's, in some cases, quite a few years behind you now...

Sanghadevi: Yes. (Laughter)

S: Well, I suffered at school in some ways: I was put off Tennyson for several years, because of the way one particular teacher taught one particular poem. But I did get over it, I think in my mid-thirties. And I started reading Tennyson again. (Pause) One can't go on indefinitely entering this plea, "Well I was put off it when I was at school".

Sanghadevi: No.

S: Well, it's all right for a few years after you leave, but, you know, twenty years later... (Laughter) No. I think that excuse begins to wear a bit thin!

_____ : I think it's quite good to learn by doing a talk. And then you can learn certain things.

S: Yes. It's quite good to do a bit of research before a talk.

_____ : .. look up things.

S: Quite. Yes, indeed. What are you looking up? (Laughter)

_____ : Psychology.

S: So how do you go about finding out, say, what Karen Horney said about neurosis? (Laughter) ... references under 'N'. It's very useful to be able to know where to get information, where information is available from. And a moderately educated person should be able to do this; whether by looking up a dictionary, or encyclopedia or ringing up the *Daily Telegraph* or whatever. You should know where to get information from, otherwise you're pretty helpless. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: I don't suppose, now you've said that you're going to give us the information we don't know! (Laughter) Well, in the list of the thirty seven factors of enlightenment - and I got so far as looking up in the *Abidharma*, what...

S: '*Bodhipakyadhammas*', they are. And you'll find them all in the Buddhist Dictionary.

Sanghadevi: Well it isn't! (Laughter) And I found it in the *Abidharma*, what the four ways of power were, and the five forces, which were the only two things that Anoma and I hadn't heard of; but then actually we couldn't elaborate on it, we didn't know where...

S: You can look up (*ittipadas*) ways to power, and also the *balas*. They are categories of somewhat minor importance, but they are good to know. I think one should look up things, not just sort of leave it: very often people do that, they come across something they don't understand, and instead of looking it up or checking the particular (unclear) they pass it on, and hope that someone will tell

them next time round. (Pause)

Subhuti was thinking at one time of having a little weekend course on something like well, how to consult a dictionary. Because some people don't even know how to do that. Especially a Pali Dictionary where the letters of the alphabet aren't arranged in the same order. You don't start with 'a', you start with 'k'. I have met adults, even in this country, who don't know how to look up things in a dictionary. They don't realise the principle on which the dictionary, the words in the dictionary are arranged. Believe it or not. So they never consult a dictionary: they don't know how to look a word up in the dictionary. And also you have to be able to spell before you can look up a word in the dictionary. Even if you know how to look it up in the dictionary. Lots of people can't spell. Some people go looking up 'cat' under 'k'. (Laughter) Well, I come across things like this.

_____ : I find myself feeling a bit sort of uncomfortable about all this talk about, well I can look up things in the dictionary. (Laughter) I was just sort of thinking about: is this sort of approach to making a Friends' approach to the Dharma a bit inaccessible to some people? I mean, already a vast number of people who seem to be attracted to "the Friends" seem to have a fair amount of education; if it's going to have a general appeal it should be, on all sort of levels really.

S: Well, what do you mean by 'on all levels' In this respect? You mean there should be some people who are permitted not to be able to look things up in a dictionary? (Laughter) No. I think what I'm basically doing is encouraging a sense of responsibility. That people should take responsibility for finding out things for themselves, when they can. I mean what's the point of asking me something which you could just as easily find out for yourself? Maybe not quite so easily but in a more rewarding way, find out for yourself by looking it up in a dictionary, or looking it up in an encyclopedia, in a Buddhist text, and certainly Order members have to learn to function in this sort of way, especially when they're preparing talks. They should have that sort of self-confidence, that sort of sense of responsibility. Not expecting me to give them every little reference, and every little explanation, all that sort of thing. It's standing more on one's own feet, and doing for oneself what one is quite able, in fact, to do for oneself. I think that people should always be encouraged to do.

Sanghadevi: I used to know someone (unclear).

S: Oh, yes. That's a different matter. If an explanation is required which isn't in a book, well I'm quite happy to give it if I'm able to do so.

_____ : I usually find I'm not actually always looking things up, because I don't always have the material available to me, like just before coming on the seminar I wanted to look something up in the *Digha Nikaya*, but I couldn't find anybody who had a copy of the *Digha Nikaya* and I even found out the following morning it'd gone to Tuscany!

S: So that (unclear) ...

_____ : The Buddhist Society have got a very good library.

S: Yes. Unfortunately they're always losing books. But they've got quite a good collection.

_____ :

Vidyasri: You said - I think it was one of the first days that we were studying - to actually practise the Dharma, in a way, all you need is, say, one teaching like the Four Noble Truths, or something, and you could get on with that and practise it, but if you're interested in communicating the Dharma then you need to know more, because you need to be able to communicate to different people. Well,

do you - I mean, with Order members, people getting ordained - do you see a place for somebody getting ordained and feeling that they were uneducated and that they weren't interested in intellectual things and therefore they were just going to sit down and do their Tara practice or whatever it was and then...

S: That's fair enough. I'd be quite happy quite happy with that.

Vidyasri: ...not follow anything else, if they weren't interested in it.

S: Well it would mean that they would have really to be working on themselves in some other way, by way, say, of intensive meditation practice. There'll be that big proviso.

Vidyasri: But you think that they would because study is very important, isn't it? To study...

S: Yes.

Vidyasri: ...so I sort of...

S: Indeed, if there were a few people in the Movement or even in the Order, who wanted to adopt a sort of "Milarepa-like" approach, I'd be quite happy with that, because there are very, very few such people around, while there are quite a lot, comparatively speaking, who are into religious study. If anyone wanted to follow that more "Milarepa-like" path, I wouldn't discourage them. I especially wouldn't feel that they weren't ordained, that they couldn't be ordained because that was their approach. I certainly wouldn't.

Vidyasri: But even so, I suppose to be able to do that you would need a clear understanding of what you were going off to do. If you were going off to meditate, you couldn't just have a feeling for meditation.

S: There would have to be a clear understanding that you had gained either as a result of your own study, or as a result of some more experienced person just putting it in a nutshell for you verbally ...

Vidyasri: And you then went off and did it.

S: ... and you then going off and practising in accordance with that more personal, concentrated instruction.

Vidyasri: Yeah. So, like, I was picking up on Hilary's point because, various people could do that, but in a way, what you're saying is, if you're interested, well follow it up.

S: Yes. Don't be lazy. It's past time. Any final questions, final queries?

Anoma: It really struck me how, in verse 50 the Buddha is saying learn the truth (unclear) practise (unclear) and take them seriously, so that the religious life lasting a long time, may be perpetuated for the (noise) it's not just for those bhikkhus, but because they'll have learnt them and practised them and they will pass them on, and it's only really the result of those that we're still doing it.

S: Right. Indeed! Otherwise the teaching would have died out very, very quickly, but the tradition, the understanding, even the realisation has been kept alive, for centuries by so many people, and not just for their own benefit, but for the benefit of succeeding generations. So perhaps one should reflect that one ought to feel very grateful to all those people through whom the Dharma, in any effective sense, has come down.

Anoma: He seems to be embodying the Bodhisattva Ideal.

S: Yes. And also, having received it, one also has, in a sense, a duty to pass it on. It doesn't sort of (unclear) with you. (Pause) Is that all then? All right.

[End of Tape Six, Tape Seven]

S: How far have we got now?

_____ : We're at Chapter Four.

S: Chapter Four. (Long Pause) And the other group, did they also do Chapter Four?

_____ : Yes. (Long Pause)

S: Which has all the questions? (Loud background noise of lorries obscures speech).

_____ : We were talking about _____ vimutti, well actually I've spent quite a few days thinking about that. I've got about three questions. The first one is: What is it that is substantial in the unconditioned?

S: Uh hm -

_____ : And did you want to hear the other ones? (Laughter)

S: Let's hear them all together.

_____ : To what extent would an enlightened being have an individual personality and then: I was reading up a bit and it says in *'The Survey'* that "*dharmas*" do not have in themselves a sort of vital energy. So is it possible that if you experienced life as insubstantial and (unclear)?

S: I take it when you use the expression "insubstantial", you're taking it as a rough equivalent of "*annata*"?

_____ : Yes.

S: That is to say the third of the three lakshanas. Here there is, in a way, a little difficulty. I don't think this has been mentioned before: that because there is insubstantiality in the conditioned, one is not to assume there is substantiality in the unconditioned. That is to say the substantiality which is missing, so to speak, in the conditioned is not to be found in the unconditioned. Here, this particular *lakshana* differs from the other two: that is to say if unconditioned bliss, say, is not to be found in the conditioned, well, it is to be found in the unconditioned, and similarly if permanence is not to be found in the conditioned, permanence is to be found, at least in a manner of speaking, in the unconditioned. But, because the substantial is not to be found in the conditioned it doesn't logically follow, as one might have thought, that the substantial is to be found in the unconditioned. This is why in those famous verses in the *Dhammapada* it says the vision, or the knowledge, that all *samskaras* are *dukkha*, is the path to purity. The knowledge, or the vision, that all *samskaras* are impermanent is the path to purity; and the knowledge that all *dhammas* are *annata* is the path to purity, because *dhammas* includes both 'unconditioned' and 'conditioned'. You see what I mean, so the word *dhamma* is substituted here in the place of *samskaras* to indicate that the unconditioned is also included.

One might say well is there any difference between the non-substantiality of the conditioned and the non-substantiality of the unconditioned. Here one arrives at a quite difficult concept. The conditioned is said to be insubstantial because everything conditioned arises in dependence on causes and conditions; and the unconditioned is said to be insubstantial because it has no "own-being"; it has no self-identity. It is not the same as itself, so to speak; that is to say, in the unconditioned the laws of logic are transcended. I don't know if you know anything about logic, but there is a law of logic which says that A is A because A cannot be not A. Do you see what I mean? In other words a thing is identical with itself, but this doesn't hold good with regard to the unconditioned: it cannot be said that the unconditioned is identical with itself; it cannot even be said that the unconditioned is the unconditioned. You see what I mean? So the unconditioned is in that sense insubstantial, thus transcending all thought, all concepts. You see what I mean?

Then with regard to that second question about the... was it whether individuality persists or in what sense it persists or exists in an enlightened person? This raises the question of individuality. One might go right to the other extreme and say that, well, the enlightened person is developing, but that still raises the question, well, what does one mean by 'individuality'. What is individuality? It is assumed that everybody has individuality, one wonders therefore whether the enlightened person has it too. What is this individuality? Does one distinguish between individuality and 'ego-hood' for instance?

_____ : (unclear) individuality (unclear - very quietly spoken) in a being where there's very little character formation, there's nothing unconditional. I don't really think you can take that...

S: I think we touched upon this in one of the groups yesterday. I think it must have been the other group. That when, let's say, a spiritually mature individual becomes enlightened, what happens? Let's take it on the most ordinary level first of all. Well, the enlightened individual has a body, a human body: so does that body change just because that person has become enlightened? Does he suddenly become twice as tall, or sprout two extra arms? What happens? Is the body the same as before, so far as one can see? Or not? .. clear that it's the same as before. Sometimes people didn't recognise the Buddha, as the Buddha, so that presumably means that, despite the traditional iconography, he looked pretty much like any other person. So, all right, the body doesn't change. But what about, so to speak, the use that is made of the body? Does that change, would you say? Was the body used in a different way? Or would it be used in a different way if someone was enlightened? Mm?

_____ : Well, not radically different from ...

S: What does one mean by "radically"? Well, presumably the body would eat and drink, but what about, as it were, the inner attitude towards the body?

_____ : It's performing only skilful actions.

S: Yeah. So there would in fact be a change in the way that the body was used: it would be used only in a completely skilful way. Well then, what about the feelings? What about the emotions? What about the emotional life? Would that change at all after enlightenment?

_____ : (Murmurs)

S: Uh? In what sort of way do you think? Have a guess.

_____ : ... very strong but it wouldn't be attached to...

S: Yes. Yes. There wouldn't be any element of unskilfulness. What about thoughts? Would an enlightened person still think?

_____ : If he chose to.

S: If he chose to, or she chose to. (Laughter) Maybe (unclear) the other group. Yes. If he or she chose to. Would there be any sort of ticking over of the mind, as it were? Well, no there wouldn't: if there were something to be thought about, with which thought was competent to deal, an enlightened person could start thinking about it and arrive at a conclusion. What about - you notice I'm going through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness here - what about realities? Would the enlightened person contemplate reality? (Pause)

_____ : He'd be immersed in them.

S: Immersed in them. He would in a sense contemplate them and in a sense not contemplate them, because he or she would be at one with them. So one could say therefore that the, as it were, apparatus of the individuality is there, that is to say, the physical body, the emotions, the thoughts; they are all there, but they've been permeated by and used by, even taken over by, that higher spiritual realisation or understanding which we call enlightenment. So one might say, that in the very depths of his being the enlightened person couldn't be described as an individual any more than he could be described as anything else, being in essence unconditioned, but would continue, so far as other people were concerned, to manifest and function as an individual, at least until the human body dropped away. What was your third question?

_____ : Um. Sorry, I got stuck on that last one, but the third question is, um, if *dhammas* do not have in themselves their own life energy, is it possible that its experience of life that ... substantial ... conditional?

S: Um. I think the short answer to that probably would be "No", in terms of Buddhist thought. Because everything conditioned is dependent on something else and that sort of for instance goes back and back indefinitely. So everything conditioned is dependent (unclear) on something else. But that does not mean that there's some sort of supernatural source of life and energy - that would not be the traditional Buddhist way of looking at things. Buddhism doesn't have any doctrine of creation. I think it's really quite important to understand that. There's no point, therefore, - and this is more especially true with regard to the Theravada or Hinayana - there is no point at which, at the beginning, the beginning of mundane things somehow is fixed to the Absolute, so that you can trace the origins of the mundane back to the Absolute, either by way of emanation or creation, or whatever. The conditioned just goes back and back in time as far as you can reach, and further: you can go on and on back and back indefinitely. You never come to an Absolute first beginning. So you never reach a point where the conditioned is joined on, so to speak, to the unconditioned, and derives its energies therefrom. It's a quite different way of looking at it.

_____ : I did (unclear) on questioning. I was, at points, chasing this God, you know, I couldn't see how people do it.

S: Yes.

Liz: Just to follow on a bit from the question about the enlightened character. When the Buddha goes to his *Parinibbana*, we had a bit of a discussion, I'm not sure if I got very clear as to, if the tendencies that he had, which is following on again from what carries on and whether he would exist on a subtler level.

S: Well, the Buddha himself seems to have been very clear about this, because there is a list of the, I think it's the twelve, unmanifest or undeclared questions. One of those is: that the Tathagata, that is to say a Buddha, exists or does not exist, or both exists and does not exist, nor neither exists nor does not exist, after death - in other words all possible logical possibilities are excluded. So it's interesting: the Buddha will not say a Buddha exists or the Tathagata exists after death, because that would assume the persistence of something unchanging, so he wants to exclude that possibility; but also he won't say that the Tathagata does not exist because for something to not exist it would assume that it existed in the first place, it existed as a fixed unchanging entity, and he wanted to exclude that possibility. So if you exclude those two, then of course, you exclude also any conjunction of those two or any disjunction of those two. One mustn't think in those terms at all. So one has to try to hold oneself in a position of logical suspense. (Laughter) You don't think of the Buddha as existing, you don't think of the Buddha as not existing. You could say, if you wanted to compromise and it is a compromise, that he exists in a very subtle form. You see what I mean? But the Buddha also said that even during his lifetime, the Buddha's nature is unfathomable, not to speak of after death. Death only means the physical body has dropped off, that doesn't make any difference to the Buddha's essential nature. He says he's unfathomable during life, that is to say, before death he is unfathomable, also after death. There's no difference. The mere fact of loss of the physical body doesn't alter the situation at all.

_____ : ... go back then to that the conditioned (unclear).

S: Yes. In other words no creation.

_____ : No. Well another question arose: if you see things as they really are, as conditioned, does that presume that you've also seen the unconditioned?

S: In a sense, yes. I think I've mentioned this in "*The Three Jewels*" that, according to the Mahayana, the conditioned in its depths is the unconditioned, so if you penetrate at all deeply into the one, you will arrive, so to speak, at the other. Even the Theravada, even the Hinayana, implies this in its teaching of the three *lakshanas* and the three corresponding *vimoksha*, *mokhas*: doors to liberation. We were going into this a bit in the other study group.

_____ : It does feel like that, that in the teaching, that if you firstly become aware of what is or what is happening, the process, and you then reflect on it, and, particularly if you reflect on it with some (unclear) you can then actually have insight. (Pause)

S: The Mahayana would say that the conditioned and unconditioned are not, so to speak, two separate entities; that if you understand the conditioned truly, that is the unconditioned.

_____ : When you say the Mahayana would say that, would the Hinayana not say that?

S: The Hinayana would not say it. I think it's sort of implied in the Hinayana, but the Hinayana, especially the Theravada, is not very prone to metaphysical, or seemingly metaphysical statements. They tend to concentrate on practice and describing the Path and to leave what you might find at the end of the Path, so to speak, veiled in silence. The Mahayana is a bit more explicit, it tries to tell you more; but sometimes the Mahayana also gets into logical difficulties, so it is difficult to say which is the wisest course. The Buddha, the historical Buddha, as far as we can tell; as far as we can tell from the Pali Canon did not say very much about Nirvana or about the goal. He said perhaps a little more that we sometimes seem to think, but compared to the number of descriptions there are of the Path, in various forms, there are very very few of the goal. He clearly felt that it was more and more something to experience rather than ...

_____ : I find it quite interesting that *vimutti* has been added to morality, meditation and wisdom in this list, and...

S: That's a quite common feature, in fact. You say "added", but...

_____ : Ah, well I hadn't...

S: ...you very often get these four terms together in the Pali texts. It doesn't seem that the fourth was added to an earlier shorter list, it doesn't seem like that. It's as though *vimutti* was important from the very beginning: *vimutti* would seem to indicate the goal. You could say that *silā*, *samadhi* and *prajna* represent the Path, and that *vimutti* represents the goal.

Anoma: I was looking at *vimutti* in "*The Three Jewels*", and you said that *vimutti* corresponds to the third stage of *sunyata*.

S: Yes.

Anoma: ... and that the first two stages of *sunyata* are represented by the Hinayana and the second two stages by the Mahayana.

S: Yes. This is traditional.

Anoma: It seems to me that in a way, the Mahayana was sort of creeping into the Hinayana by *vimutti* being added, the one added to the other.

S: I'm not quite clear what the point is.

Anoma: Um...

S: You have to be careful sort of transferring terms from one context, or from the context of one "yana" to the context of another.

Sanghadevi: Would it be true to say, like, in the teachings of the four *sunyatas* which is a Mahayana...

S: Yes.

Sanghadevi: ...doctrinal.... well it's an operational concept ... but there were the seeds of it in the Hinayana?

S: Yes. Right. I think one could say that in almost all cases that the seeds of the Mahayana teachings are to be found in the Hinayana, but not developed. Some Japanese Mahayana scholars have gone into this quite a lot, trying to show that the Mahayana is sort of present in embryonic form in the Hinayana itself.

Sanghadevi: Shouldn't it be that when *vimutti* appears in the Pali texts that the Mahayana... I mean, coming across that in the Pali texts, then, will try to elaborate on what they felt and would understand by it.

S: Right. Yes. Because the Mahayana who took up the Hinayana terms, interpret them in its own way, so to speak, especially if, in the course of the centuries, the term used by the Hinayana had

become a bit vague. (Pause)

Vidyasri: When you were saying we should be careful not to mix up terms taken from one 'yana' into the other? Would you say that then *vimutti* in this sense, one should not too sort of closely say, "well that's the third level of *sunyata* in the Mahayana"?

S: Yes. One must be very careful talking at all about this, about this level: one could say how can one speak about levels in *sunyata*. I mean you could say the term is an operational concept. One has to try and sort of feel one's way into what is really meant by this. Can one really divide *sunyata* into levels? What do you mean by levels of *sunyata*?

Anoma: But if I get into thinking like that, then I don't bother to... I mean that's what I tend to do: I think, well, how can you divide *sunyata* into four levels, and then I don't bother to find out about it. (Slight laugh)

S: Well you divide and you try to understand what is meant by each level, and then you undivide and try to bring them all together again. (Pause) We're getting to rather rarefied heights. (Laughter)

_____ : Could I ask a question. My experience is that the FWBO is based on the Mahayana maybe more than on the other yanās. Would you still say this?

S: Well, yes and no. (Laughter). It depends on what one means by the Mahayana. I mean we are based just on Buddhism - Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana one might say, so in what sense are we based on the Mahayana? What do you think might be said in answer?

_____ : I think what has been meant is that the Bodhisattva Ideal is very much emphasised...

S: I wouldn't say that it's emphasised, but at least it's present. I mean the Bodhisattva Ideal is believed to be a characteristic of the Mahayana Ideal. But we don't look on the Bodhisattva Ideal as excluding the Arahant Ideal. We see the Arahant Ideal and the Bodhisattva Ideal as representing, or embodying, what we may call the self-regarding and other-regarding aspects of the spiritual life, so when it is said that we base ourselves strongly on the Bodhisattva Ideal, well, that may be true, but only on the understanding that we don't regard the Bodhisattva Ideal as essentially a different ideal from the Arahant Ideal. We are concerned with the Ideal of Enlightenment. The Arahant Ideal presents one aspect of that, and the Bodhisattva Ideal presents another aspect. So that's why I said well, yes, we are based on the Mahayana in one sense, but in another sense we are not.

_____ : Would you say that in the West it's useful to emphasise the Bodhisattva Ideal?

S: It's useful anywhere. (Laughter) It's useful to emphasise the Arahant Ideal. One should emphasise both, perhaps. You see what I mean? I think a lot of people outside the FWBO would be very happy to fit us into some neat little category and then, sort of, well, I won't say dismiss us, but think that they can pin us down. (Pause) And they feel a bit uneasy if they're unable to classify us as Theravada, or Zen, or Vajrayana. They try to classify us as Western Buddhists: well, what does that mean, what do we actually teach? This is something that is quite knotty. If you say, "Well, we teach Buddhism". That doesn't seem to be enough, they want to know what kind of Buddhism.

Vidyasri: It seems that even within the Friends some people are more attracted, seem more attracted to the Hinayana, to the Arahant Ideal, and other people seem, right from their first contact with the Friends to really pick up on the Bodhisattva Ideal and to become more interested in that, um...

S: Well, some people change from time to time.

Vidyasri: Mmm. (Laughter)

S: They may be very like the Buddha or, say, Milarepa, for a year or two. They may be into the Pali texts. But the movement as a whole, the FWBO as a whole, isn't identified with any particular Buddhist tradition. Which makes us rather difficult to get hold of. (Laughter). (Pause).

Sanghadevi: Do you think there can be a benefit in pursuing one particular tradition, well, quite wholeheartedly?

S: Well, even one particular tradition is quite a big thing, well, I mean, Buddhism itself is quite a big thing, in a sense, if you take Buddhism as a sort of historical phenomenon, there's no question of following it: it's much too vast, if you mean practising all its particular teachings. In the same way, if you take even one particular tradition, say the Theravada tradition, or the Vajrayana tradition, or Ch'an - each tradition is so vast - there's so much in it: there's no question of practising it all. If you think, say, of Ch'an, well, all right you practise Ch'an or Zen, let us say, is it going to be Rinzai, or is it going to be Soto, or there are several other kinds; or which particular line within that school? Can you follow it all, can you practise everything that all those masters practised? Can you go through all those koans, etc, etc. No! The whole idea of following, or practising according to a particular school is a bit unrealistic. So what is the position in which one finds oneself? One finds oneself in the position of being an individual who wants to grow, to develop, who has some faith, some confidence in the Buddhist tradition, who Goes for Refuge, who reads Buddhist scriptures, Pali texts, Mahayana sutras, "Songs of Milarepa", and you take from all these sources what you find actually does help you in your spiritual development. After all, it's all part of Buddhism. It all comes ultimately from the Buddha, from the Buddha's Enlightenment. So you don't think that you've necessarily got to follow any particular, as it were, set of practices because they all hang together, historically. You take, so to speak, what you need in the light of your own individual development. You may take a verse from Milarepa, a chapter from the *Dhammapada*: this is (unclear) scriptures. This form of meditation which comes from Zen. Mindfulness of Breathing from the Theravada and so on, just as you find again in Zen. All these things hang together for you.

Vidyasri: I suppose you might find yourself for a year or something kind of trying to, well, one might be, say, taking the whole of the Pali Canon and getting into that for a year or two...

S: Yes.

Vidyasri: ...and concentrating mainly on that or mainly on sutras or something.

S: There's also the point that individual historical traditions of Buddhism in the East are bound up with all sorts of cultural factors which aren't of very much concern to us, and usually, if you follow a particular tradition or try to follow a particular tradition of Eastern Buddhism, you get too much involved in all those (unclear) and sometimes you are almost unable to dissociate the cultural trappings from the spiritual essence. (Pause)

Liz: It's as well, though, to know where everything that we do, where it comes from.

S: Oh yes, that is quite useful. Yes. (Pause). Some people would like to think of this as a sort of syncretism. It isn't a syncretism, because a syncretism is brought about or is the result of a sort of intellectual activity. You know, taking this from here, or that from there, in accordance with some preconceived intellectual idea; but our guiding principle is the needs of the individual in the course of his or her spiritual development: We find Mindfulness of Breathing useful, we find Metta

Bhavana useful, we find the precepts useful we find retreats useful, we find communication exercises useful, etc. - this is why we take (unclear) but we don't take everything from every source; we take only what is relevant to our own needs, because the various sources are so vast, we don't need everything. Quite a lot of what was perhaps useful in the past is not useful to us now; perhaps it will be useful later on but not now. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: I heard that somebody had asked you if you felt there'd ever be a place for using Christian symbolism, and that in practices or meditations, something like that, and that you'd said not for about five hundred years. (Laughter)

S: But there again there is the question: what does one mean by "using symbolism"? I mean, can one use symbolism? How are things symbols? Because of a determination on the part of the conscious mind. Do you see what I mean? Supposing in your dreams, or in your meditation, Christian or what seem to be Christian symbols arise, well, what are you going to do about it? You can't think you'll come back in five hundred years time. (Laughter) Somebody in the other study group was saying that she'd had visions of the Virgin Mary after she became involved with Buddhism and she doesn't like the Virgin Mary at all, and she doesn't think the Virgin Mary represents the spiritual ideal at all, I don't know why! (Laughter) ... think: one doesn't think. So, you've got to deal with that, in your own personal life. I think what the person was asking about and what I was thinking of was whether one could sort of make public use of what were traditionally regarded as Christian symbols. Could you, for instance, have a crucifix on the shrine? (Laughter) I can't really see any place for a crucifix on the shrine, not even after 500 years! (Laughter) not even after five thousand, because that whole attitude of having a symbol, (background clattering obscures words) with torture, seems completely (unclear). (Pause) So, certainly for the foreseeable future, there won't be any crucifixes on our shrines. The Virgin Mary, I'm not so sure. (Laughter) She might be assimilated to Tara. She does look a bit Tara-like sometimes - without baby Jesus, of course. (Laughter) What do the Catholics call her? Mary, the Queen of Heaven, with seven stars around her head and twenty demons under her foot, well, it is a bit Tara-like isn't it, if you look at it objectively? So maybe we will have, one day, Tara images which look a bit like the Virgin Mary just to incorporate all those Christian symbols, but not a crucifix and no God the Father: it would be very difficult to have a God the Father figure on a Buddhist shrine. As for Jesus, I think he's a bit compromised. I think the Virgin Mary stands the best chance .. (Laughter) Maybe Christian angels: perhaps we could use that sort of iconography after two or three hundred years. Bodhisattvas, angelic figures, they don't have to look like Oriental princes or princesses, it makes them rather distant perhaps. Maybe they should look a bit more like Fra Angelico's angels: beautiful coloured wings.

Sridevi: Ratnavira gave a talk on Michelangelo at our Centre recently and he made the point that Michelangelo's painting of God and Jesus were completely untraditionally presented: it was more like Power and Energy and that seemed to ...

S: Very mundane.

_____ : ... just like a new angle to those figures. I could see that they might be difficult to use. I think it's very difficult because we've got all the weighty conditioning. We're not as individual as Michelangelo. (Background clatter)

Sanghadevi: Devamitra's been seeing two different sets of people involved in the Manjusri Institute, well one is to... well, each... they all have shrines, and on two of the four shrines there's a picture of Christ, and well, one of the people has said that one of the Lamas, for the public shrines, was going to have a picture of Christ, and she actually suggested it might not be a good idea, but it did seem that there is... well, I don't know what...

S: I think probably their idea is the very worthy one of absorbing Christianity; I think I'd think you have to be very careful that Christianity doesn't absorb you! Because after all people's Christian conditioning and all that is very very strong, so I think one needs to separate ourselves from those things at least for a few hundred years.

_____: Yes. I was at a talk once where a Tibetan Lama was asked if the Buddha had been born again as Christ, and he said "Maybe", and I sort of felt really enraged, and this lady was quite sort of satisfied with that...

S: (Interrupting) Well, it was such a silly question to begin with...

_____: ...and she...

S: ... given a silly answer. "Maybe"! Well, what sort of answer is that! (Laughter) I think they are a bit confused themselves in some cases. Well it is after all quite difficult to try to combine two sort of (unclear)... What can one do? For instance, just to give you an example, in India, there is a sect - I don't know if anybody's heard of them - ladies are very prominent in this sect: it's practically run by ladies. It's called the *Brahmakumaris*, have you heard of them? There're quite a few of them in England. They dress in white and they're very strong on celibacy, but their main point is that the *Bhagavad Gita* was not in fact preached by *Krishna*, but by *Shiva*. *Shiva* is one of the gods of Hinduism, *Krishna* is one of the reincarnations, so their point is that, I mean, everyone else thinks the *Bhagavad Gita* was preached by *Krishna* on the battlefield to his disciple, *Arjuna*; so the *Brahmakumaris* say, "No, no. It wasn't preached by *Krishna*, it was preached by *Shiva*". This is their great point which they go round telling everybody. Well, in a way, it's meaningless. What does it mean to say that the *Bhagavad Gita* was preached by one mythological figure rather than another mythological figure!? (Laughter) So, in the same way what's the point of saying the Buddha was reborn as Christ, you're confusing two completely different things. Furthermore, this idea of the Buddha being reborn and the idea of even Christ being the rebirth of, say, the Buddha: Do you mean this is quite irreconcilable with orthodox Christian teaching, because Christ is the incarnate son of God, the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity, the incarnate *Logos*, this is orthodox Christian teaching, so how can you... you're not true to Christianity in making that sort of statement, nor are you true to Buddhism. Do you see what I mean? I'm not saying that you shouldn't try to reconcile Buddhism and Christianity. All right, if you feel that this is your mission, all right, do so. But in order to reconcile Buddhism and Christianity you've got to know Buddhism and to know Christianity. You've got to be honest. You've got to be true to Buddhism and true to Christianity and reconcile the real Christianity with the real Buddhism, not reconcile two imaginary versions. If you have an imaginary version of Christianity and another imaginary version of Buddhism, it might be very easy to reconcile the two, but have you really reconciled Buddhism and Christianity? You see what I mean? You must know them and know them really well; know them in depth; know them thoroughly and then maybe suggest some kind of hypothesis or framework which might be vast enough to include them both, which would be very, very vast indeed.

So when someone asks the question, "Well, could you say that Christ was the Buddha reborn?" Well, it shows absolute confusion. Why does someone want even to think that. They are afraid of thinking. They don't want to really go into the matter deeply. They want a vague reassurance. They want to keep on the right side of Jesus, in case he sends them to Hell. (Laughter) They want to keep on the right side of the Buddha just in case, you know, bad karma (unclear)... sort of comfortably keep them together, which is really quite shameful. And lamas and other Buddhist teachers, they shouldn't carry on. They don't really know their Buddhism.

Sanghadevi: Do you think somewhere they might be trying to do what Padmasambhava did when,

um ...

S: (Interrupting) Well, I'd be very pleased if they did what Padmasambhava did, but what did he do? He converted the gods and demons of Tibet and made them take an oath to protect Buddhism, he didn't allow them to invade Buddhism unconverted! (Laughter) But this is what these people seem to be doing, they seem to be opening the door to all these Christian gods and demons, and allowing them in unconverted. You've got to be sure you've converted them first before you let them in. (Laughter) I mean he ripped open their breasts and took out their life essence, so we're told! So, are these lamas doing that? Was that lama doing that with his, "Maybe!" (Loud Laughter) ... life essence of Christ. (Laughter) 'Maybe!' Christ has ripped out his life essence on the other hand. Do you see what I mean? I mean, you must really know what you are grappling with. I think these lamas are often very innocent. They just don't know what they're up against. They don't know the strength of the Christian tradition.

_____ : You'd have to make sure the Virgin Mary was well and truly converted!

S: Yes indeed you would! Yes. (Laughter; pause) That takes several centuries. [Pause] One mustn't forget, after all, Christianity is a very ancient tradition, it's two thousand years old, it's the major religious tradition of the West: it has produced many great thinkers, poets, artists, mystics and so on. It's a very powerful tradition. You can't just sort of try to incorporate a few bits and pieces. (Pause) I'm not against synthesis, if synthesis is possible, but it must be a genuine synthesis, otherwise you won't achieve very much. Well, there's much in Christianity which is really irreconcilable with Buddhism, and from a Buddhist point of view is just plain wrong.

[End of side one side two]

S: This brings us to the question of thinking: that people need to think more. Very often when people embark on the spiritual life they seem to leave their thinking capacity outside that. I don't know whether this is any legacy from Christianity, but obviously from a Buddhist point of view, thought certainly is important. One shouldn't shrink from the task of thinking things out and having a clear intellectual understanding as well as overflowing faith and devotion.

Vidyasri: But you're not encouraged to think in Christianity, you're not, because you're encouraged to take on and believe, and if you think, actually you start questioning, and then it starts undermining the dogma.

S: Well, in Buddhism, you're encouraged to do this.

Vidyasri: Yes.

S: So it's time people got over that conditioning.

Vidyasri: Yeah.

S: So it means first of all you've got to learn: you've got to listen, take things in and then you've got to reflect on them and try to assimilate them intellectually. Come to grips with it and ask questions if you're not clear; if you're not sure. Argue the point! I know sometimes this is very tiresome for study group leaders, but it has to be done! In Buddhism you're not expected to swallow everything. If something is presented in the form of say, so to speak an intellectual statement, at least you have to sort of - what shall I say - accept the possibility of Enlightenment as a sort of provisional hypothesis. It's not really something you can argue about, at least accept it as a provisional hypothesis.

Trisha: In one of your lectures I heard you say that most thinking was caused by anxiety. Could you say something about the difference between them?

S: Ah. Yes. When I said most thinking is caused by anxiety, I was thinking of the sort of thinking in which people usually engage or indulge. I gave an example of somebody who used to drive me round, and I sometimes used to navigate, and he'd always want to know exactly what was going to happen several miles ahead, and I'd say, "well, after three hundred yards we'll come to a turning, you turn right and then after three miles you turn left", but he wanted to know all the time, "well, after that, well, after that?" I used to say, "I'll tell you when we come to the turning." But, no, he seemed very anxious in wanting to know, thinking about what was coming ahead, long before it actually came. Long before it was necessary to think. That sort of thinking I call thinking which is dominated by anxiety.

Another example, say, someone on retreat, this is an actual example from the early days of the Friends. He says, "Well, when the retreat is over, how will I get to the town?" "Well, there's a bus at three o'clock." "Suppose I missed that bus?" "Well there's another one at four." "Well, suppose I miss that one too?" "Well, you're not likely to miss that one if you're careful". "Well suppose I get talking with someone: how can I be sure I'll remember?" (Laughter) Etc, etc. That sort of thinking is dominated by anxiety. But what I might call "objective" thinking - seeing that there is a problem to resolve, and applying your mind to it constructively - that is, not dominated by anxiety. You see what I mean? So the second is definitely to be encouraged, not only with regard to Buddhism, but generally. This is more like "*cintamaya prajna*": the wisdom which comes from reflecting or reflection; from your own independent thought; turning things over in your mind; trying to understand, trying to penetrate. This sort of thinking is creative. It's true that this sort of thinking, by itself, is not enough to get you to Enlightenment, but it does help you along the way, at least to a certain extent, and is not to be despised. (Pause) You don't have to abdicate your reason when you come into Buddhism. You recognise that there are certain spheres where reason is not applicable; but there are many other spheres where it is very much so! You can use your reason to solve a lot of woolly thinking; get rid of "*micchaditthis*"; clarify your own purpose.

Anoma: Bhante, I mean, I can understand that, I think, but I've found that's OK if I feel emotionally... if I read something and I don't understand it, but I, I emotionally do want to understand it, then I can sort of grapple with it, and reflect and ask questions, and things, but if I read something that doesn't emotionally affect me; it leaves me cold, but I know, well it's part of Buddhism and I sort of think, well I should understand it, I find it very difficult then to do that, because basically, I'm not interested. (Laugh)

S: I think you have to first of all read whatever material you emotionally connect with, and everything in Buddhism hangs together, sooner or later you'll come round to the other bits, that you don't at present feel any emotional connection with.

Anoma: I suppose it's with study groups, I can... (Laughs)

S: Well you have to do your best. Or if most of the material is not what you emotionally connect with, well you've got to hand over to somebody else.

Anoma: Yes.

S: You can't just sort of take a study group "cold".

_____ : What happens sometimes, when I'm trying to see through things (unclear) ... you get

to the point where you have a right feeling that you've understood something, obviously on a certain level, and it's at that point that I want to check it out with (unclear).. but I never know how much to sort of believe in that right feeling.

S: Well, perhaps one has to ask oneself, what one means by a "right" feeling. The word "right" here would seem to be very ambiguous, because it could be "right" as opposed to "wrong", could be "right" as opposed to "correct", it can be "right" as opposed to "bad", "right" in the sense of "feeling good", "right" in the sense of "being clear", "right" in the sense of being "emotionally satisfied", thus becoming a bit suspect. (Laughter) But one can't really leave feeling out of the thinking process (unclear) ... autonomous thinking. D H Lawrence gives a definition of thought: he says, "Thought is a man, in his wholeness", (of course, he means woman too) (Laughter) "wholly attending". A man in his wholeness wholly attending. It's thought bringing the whole of yourself to bear on a particular issue, a particular topic, with awareness and consciousness. "Wholly attending." (Pause)

Very often there are not many issues that really grip us, that we really want to give ourselves to wholly, and really attend to and think about. The issue really must grip us: we really want to know. (Pause) I mean, is existence one or many? Is there such a thing as mind? Is matter different from mind? What is matter? What is mind? Unless we really feel very strongly about these sort of questions we won't ever really think about them very much. They have to grip us. Otherwise, we just shrug our shoulders and think "well, maybe". (Pause)

_____ : That's the kind of thing somewhat like I was referring to - that (unclear) becomes inspiring - it opens you up till (unclear), so in other words it's not closing down - you know, you're not shutting off. (Pause).

S: Yes. Yes.

_____ : (unclear) you don't stop there, though - the point you've got to (unclear) because it feels right at that point.

S: One must ask some questions that need to be brought to a practical conclusion. For instance, you might be giving thought to the question whether it is better to live in a small or in a large community; that is to say, a community of four or five, or a community of eight or ten or twelve. Well, this is something to which one needs to give one's mind, (Laughter) to give a thought, there are definite pros, definite cons, to be elucidated so that you may come to a conclusion, in accordance with your own requirements. Not just vaguely say "Oh, well, I suppose there's something to be said for both of them", and leave it at that. You must really apply your mind to the issue, work it out; sort it out; think about it; try and understand the principles involved. Try and understand how either situation will affect you, knowing yourself to be whatever you are. Don't just sort of drift into things. (pause).

And what is the difference, say, between 'metta' and 'karuna'? Don't just leave it by saying, "Ah, well, I suppose there's some difference, but they're very similar. It doesn't really matter what the difference is", (Soft laughter) so then pass on. That isn't good enough. Understand that everyone is different. Ask yourself the question, "How does the one differ from the other?" You can then explain to other people. A lot of people are really lazy when it comes to thinking. Don't you think so? (Laughter) They don't use their minds. Obviously, I'm not suggesting anxiety-ridden thought but constructive thinking, creative thinking.

Sanghadevi: I think it is very true that you have to be emotionally gripped by something to pursue it. (Pause).

S: Some people find the *Abidharma* absolutely fascinating; they are gripped by that.

_____ : I was just wondering about concentration being ... towards ...

S: Oh, yes, of course, because if you are being constantly being distracted, well then, you can't think. Thinking implies sustained energy. "A man in his wholeness wholly attending", and keeping on attending. Holding the whole of yourself there. That isn't easy if you're not a very integrated person. If you haven't got the time, or are working in a co- op! (Laughter).

Anoma: ...I find happens is I think I'm just learning to do that a little bit, to do some constructive thinking about things, particularly if I've got quite a lot of, like on a solitary retreat, I did that, to some extent, but then, well, I came back and certain things, certain ideas, things I had thought out... but I find, like, for example, being here (Laugh) was from another perspective, and then I'm not sure whether it's not all rubbish, you know (Laughter)

S: (Words obscured by laughter) ... one hopefully changes and modifies one's ideas; fresh points of view come before one, or fresh information.

Anoma: But then it's like I feel I can't use the material: I feel there's some quite important things in that, but because I keep changing my perspective, I feel I can't...

S: What you need is another retreat. (Pause) I think one has to accept that one isn't going to come to a fixed, 'closed' point of view. You are going to be growing and therefore expanding, and therefore (Laughter obscures words), one's horizons are enlarging all the time, because you are modifying and recasting things, but there will be a sort of thread of continuity. It's not that you're changing your mind, so much, you're extending; you're opening out, you're enlarging; you're seeing things from an additional point of view. It doesn't mean that the original point of view is necessarily wrong, except, perhaps, in its exclusiveness.

Anoma: Mm. I think that in the past sometimes what's made thinking difficult for me is that I can always see another point of view all the time, somehow, that something doesn't seem to emerge from it, because I always say, "But, yes, there is also this..."

S: I had a letter this morning from someone who went on a retreat led by you, immediately you came out of solitary retreat, apparently, and she wrote, "it was very refreshing to have the retreat led by someone with a definite sense of direction." (Laughter)

_____ : I didn't say that! [Laughter]

S: And knowing exactly what the retreat was all about, and what needed to be done. This point was made quite strongly by this correspondent, early this morning. (Laughter)

Sanghadevi: I suppose you have to come to provisional decisions and act on them, but you can't come to something absolute.

S: Or you can't act; if you wait until you're absolutely, one hundred per cent certain, you're going to have to wait (unclear). You have to act very often with inadequate knowledge; you are compelled to act. You might be committing all sorts of mistakes. But in a sense, mistakes are not mistakes. For instance, you might come to the conclusion, going back to the previous example, that you ought to live in a large community, not a small one, so you decide to do so, but after a while, you discover that you made a mistake. Well, never mind, it's not a mistake which can't be corrected. You could

even say that a mistake which can be corrected is not a mistake. But supposing you just sort of stood still and have been unable to make up your mind large community, small community, large community, small community, pro, con, pro, con; so you never join a community at all. You haven't 'made a mistake', but you're making just a much bigger mistake, in another sort of way. Do you see what I mean? It isn't really very useful to think too much in terms of avoiding mistakes. Do the best you can; take the best decision you can in the light of the available evidence as understood by you, and be ready to change if necessary.

So, no mistake is really a mistake if it can be corrected. I think there are very few mistakes that can't be corrected. The only sort of mistake that can't be corrected is the sort involving life itself. You know, if you take a decision involving somebody's life, well, if you take a wrong decision and that person dies, well, you can't correct that mistake, but such decisions are rare.

Anoma: I've noticed the more I have not been afraid to act on things that I've thought out, that the more then you can see, (Laugh) although in a sense, then, it seems rubbish, what you've thought before, then you do move on. You do keep changing.

S: Yes. It's only by acting upon what you think at present that you can see things more clearly and therefore can move on, because it's not possible always to work things out in theory and then put into practice, you have to work them out at least partly in practice too, in an experimental sort of fashion. How can you say before you live in a big community - how can you really know what it's like to live in a big community. You can't be absolutely sure whether you accept or reject that.
(Pause)

_____ : I keep finding that my attempts at thinking things out just lead me straight back to experience all the time and that I can't, at the stage I'm at at the moment, do any creative thought because I just haven't got the experience.

S: Well, in a way, that is a quite creative conclusion. (Laughter) If your thinking leads you back to experience. (Pause)

_____ : But what do I do with my thought? (Laughter)

S: Try again.

_____ : What, try to be ...

S: I'm sure there's something you can think about.

_____ : (Laughter) Only neurotic thought ... (Laughter obscures words)

S: Well even that!

Sridevi: One can be quite emotional about one's own thought, I realise that if I have one creative thought I become very emotional. (Laughter) It's my thought.

S: Well, you've given birth to something. (Pause) Anyway are we getting off the track? (Laughter) Not really, I suppose. The track is very broad: it's very difficult to get off it.

Sridevi: ... being witty I was thinking about how superficiality and vagueness come to be such obstacles to get to clear thinking and insight. I mean, how do you get through?

S: Well, one of the things that one really needs to do I think, very often, is to ask oneself the meaning of the words that one uses. I mean even in the FWBO we tend to use words in a quite hackneyed sort of way: so a lot of the terms become sort of clichés, but ask ourselves well, what do we really mean by these terms that we are using all the time, and that we think, perhaps, we understand. What do we mean by 'commitment'? What do we mean by 'openness'? What do we mean by 'receptivity'? What do we mean by 'communication'? What do we mean by 'creative'? You see what I mean? We often use these terms, but do we ever stop to think out what they really mean?

Bodhisri: You find out through translating, actually much more because then you have to really think on the words.

S: Oh, indeed!

Bodhisri: Try out several words in your own language.

S: Translating into... ?

Bodhisri: Dutch.

_____ : ... actually it was our first study group.

S: For instance, I remember one of our Germans friends told us she had great difficulty in finding a proper German word for 'spiritual'. She had to ask herself, well, or ask us, well what did we mean, in the FWBO, when we use the word 'spiritual'? She ended up thinking that maybe a word something like 'existential' would be better. So, what would you say was 'spiritual' in Dutch?

_____ : (Very soft spoken - inaudible; laughter)

S: Spiritual (Laughter) 'spiritual community': how would one render that?

_____ : ...

S: Sangha. Maybe it's better to stick to the original Indian word and just say 'sangha', and explain what you mean by that. Even 'individual' isn't easy to translate.

_____ : ... 'aware' and 'mindful' are untranslated in Dutch. (Loud Laughter)

S: Oh. (Loud laughter obscures words) ... the Dutch are a very mindful people. (Many voices together)

_____ : I wouldn't say that! (Loud laughter)

_____ : ... interpret the word it by 'conscience' or something like that.

S: Yeah, yeah! Yes, I remember discussions with Vajrayogini some years ago about some of these terms. Anyway, any other points arising out of chapter four?

Sanghadevi: We talked a little bit about what happened to the Buddha's body; whether it was symbolical, or whether it was actually so, that his body, that his skin, was quite clear, at particular times and we were trying to relate it to more down to earth experiences of when people die.

S: But does one ever find that people's expression changes in this sort of way? Does one find that?

To a more limited extent, well one does. So it's feasible at least to think that the Buddha's complexion, or skin, or face should have changed in an unprecedented way. (unclear) ... the Buddha himself was an unprecedented individual. Sometimes people look very bright. I certainly noticed and commented on the fact some time ago, whenever I go down to London and I address a group of the people in the Shrine room, it's very noticeable the difference in their expressions, say, from the people I've seen on the underground. They could only be described as much much brighter, so you can imagine the Buddha being brighter still, especially at certain crucial moments of his life.

Vidyasri: I felt quite happy, actually, to take it on that level and quite a sort of straightforward level, that he was just about to pass into his *parinibbana*, which was a kind of amazing thing, and that his body changed, and when it talks about the water becoming pure, and the cloth of gold seeming subdued next to his body, it seemed very possible to me, that it was like this sort of round of miracles was kind of coming into the ordinary world.

S: Yeah, yeah. On the other hand, it was a, sort of, quite understandable sort of miracle. Sort of an extension of something that we do experience on a very small scale. (Pause)

Vidyasri: Something, I mean, it isn't that big an issue, but we wondered, when the Buddha goes to Chanda to eat, to what extent he knew that the food was poisoned, and that through that he was going to die, because in one way he must have known.

S: Yes. It's as though he did have some knowledge or awareness of the facts because he did give instructions, according to the full version, to Chanda not to serve any left over food to anybody else, but to bury the remainder, which seems rather strange. So perhaps the Buddha did feel, it seems, that the time had come for him to die, and it didn't matter by whatsoever cause, whatsoever condition, it seemed appropriate. So, in a sense, his death was a voluntary death, voluntary, at least as regards that particular time. He could have hung on for a few more weeks, but he might have felt, "Well, what's the use, I've done my task, I've nothing more to do; this will be an appropriate moment to die", so he did not refuse what was offered, even though he knew that it was going to bring about his death, not to avoid that. But at the same time had to be careful that other people weren't harmed. (pause) One might say it's quite a big thing to be able to reject the possibility of further life, even a few days or a few weeks. One finds that also in the case of Socrates (unclear)... moved at all. It's quite an extraordinary thing.

_____ : And Milarepa.

S: And Milarepa. Yes. Though one isn't surprised as much in the case of Milarepa, for after all, he was enlightened. In the case of Socrates, it's a bit different. The context is different. He didn't even claim to be wise, what to speak of enlightened, but nonetheless he did have that firmness of mind. (Pause)

_____ : We found it quite interesting too, that the Buddha is referred to as the Happy One.

S: Yes - '*Saugata*'. Yes. (Pause) Sometimes the Buddhists from medieval India were not called '*buddhas*' which means followers of the Buddha, but '*saugatas*', 'followers of the Happy One' but you could say they were called just Happies. (Laughter) So when you're a Buddhist you've got to be a Happy. (Laughter) If you're not a 'Happy' you're not a Buddhist. If someone asks you what do you belong to, or what you are called: "Well, I'm a Happy". (Laughter), a *Saugatata*(?). It's interesting why '*buddha*' caught on and '*saugata*' didn't. All through the medieval period, well the beginning of the Christian era, right down to about some time corresponding to the Norman conquest in England (unclear) '*saugata*' appears quite often in Sanskrit. Even in non-Buddhist literature too, Buddhists are referred to as *saugatas* (unclear). People like Shankhara. (Pause)

_____ : Maybe they just stopped being happy!

S: Well, yes, especially when the (unclear) started persecuting them: the Muslims started burning down their temples and viharas. (Pause) Though no doubt the best of them were happy even then. (Pause) I wonder what would happen if we started calling ourselves *saugatas*, instead of *Bauddhas*? or instead of Buddhists? (Laughter) ... Awake ... (Several voices together; words lost). (Words lost; loud laughter)

Vidyasri: You'd feel you, sort of, had to, sort of, definitely have something to live up to then. (Laughter)

S: ...

Vidyasri: It would make me feel like I'd have to go round with a grin on my face the whole time.

S: Perhaps you would. At least a gentle smile. (Laughter; pause) Anyway, any other points? (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Could you spell '*saugata*'?

S: Yes. S-a-u-g-a-t-a, '*sugata*' is the noun form and '*saugata*' is the one could say, a formal form. '*Saugata*' means 'pertaining to the *sugata*', belonging to the '*sugata*'. I notice here the last lines of this chapter, "By destruction of greed, hatred and delusion, he attains to the final bliss." Not even final Nirvana or enlightenment but final bliss ...

Vidyasri: I very much get the feeling of a sort of excitement as it's getting nearer to the Buddha's *Parinirvana*. And it's never struck me before, because I heard that you've had said recently that we should celebrate the *Parinirvana* Day more, and when we have at the LBC the last few years, I haven't really connected with it; it hasn't...

S: I also said, you know, when I said, "celebrate the *Parinirvana*", on that day celebrate all our departed friends.

_____ : Yeah.

S: I don't know whether that also came across in what I said.

_____ : No, it didn't. I didn't hear that. No.

S: I said, well, we should celebrate. I was thinking of Vangisa, because Vangisa's death anniversary would be very near that day, so I thought it would be a good day, or a good idea, to celebrate the *Parinirvana*, or commemorate the Buddha's passing away, and also, at the same time, all those friends of our own who passed away, especially during the previous year, but all past friends. Remember them all on that occasion, because there's going to be more and more of them, and we're not going to be able to keep up all their anniversaries every year, so why not just celebrate them with the *Parinirvana* Day of the Buddha himself. You see what I mean? This is what I was thinking. So on that day people could commemorate those departed Order members, there's only one, Vangisa.

Voices: Two, there's Padmasiddhi.

S: Oh, sorry, yes, Padmasiddhi: there's two; departed mitras, departed friends, and even their own

departed relations, if their parents who have died, or brother or sister or child who had died during the previous year, that also will be commemorated at the appropriate centre. And then you get a sort of feeling of solidarity between the living and the dead. They've all Gone for Refuge, the living and the dead, in the case of Order members. You see what I mean? This was my idea; and I thought that would give a little more content to that particular celebration. It wasn't just the Buddha's Parinirvana, Death, that anniversary, but the commemoration of the death of so many other people connected with us, spiritually connected and otherwise. I think there should be an occasion on which that is done.

So, as I said, I believe perhaps, that next year, either here at Padmaloka or at the LBC there should be a simultaneous celebration everywhere, with all the people commemorating the memory of their own deceased friends, and the names of the people being commemorated could be read out or their photograph put on the shrine, as we had Vangisa's.

Because in the case of people who have died, there is, yes, often a sense of bereavement and so on, a sense of loss, or sorrow that needs, I think, to be brought into the open and put within a definite spiritual context. Well, we can do that, I think, in this way on *Parinirvana* Day. So, clearly, pictures of Order members who've died, mitras who've died can be put on the shrine and people could bring along photographs of their deceased mother or father or anybody that they wanted to remember on that occasion, and put them also on the shrine, for the occasion.

Anoma: I heard a doctor on the radio recently, saying that it took five years to get over grieving: it was somebody's brother had died in the Falklands and he was saying that his wife was apparently saying, "Well, you must get over it", and it had only been about two or three weeks and he just felt he couldn't get over it, and the doctor was replying, well, it actually takes five years.

S: It has also been said recently, or emphasised, that mourning in the full sense, even external, even ritual mourning, is a sort of psychological necessity and you do yourself harm is not undergoing that process. So I think it is important that we should do this in a positive way. There have been a lot of people I know who have lost parents and lost brothers or sisters or friends, and, you know, some provision must be made for, so to speak, mourning or getting over those bereavements.

_____ : Can you clarify that a bit, Bhante? What aspects of mourning are necessary, do you think?

S: The articles I have been reading make the point that, well, first of all you should acknowledge your own sense and feeling of loss; not try to stifle it; and that you should go through the process of mourning. For instance, there should be a funeral service: apparently that is very helpful to bereaved people; even visits to the graves of people who have died; even wear mourning, if your culture calls for that. You see what I mean? These things do help, psychologically. They help you to get over the bereavement. But you need to act out your mourning, so to speak, to some extent; to do something; to do something to show your sense of loss; to give expression to that, in an almost formal sort of way. This is why all cultures have rites of mourning and so on. But in modern secular times we sort of have given them (unclear). if we are Buddhists in the West, well, we give up the Christian way of doing things, but perhaps we haven't yet devised a Buddhist, an appropriate Buddhist way of doing things. This is what we have to do. (Pause)

Anoma: I think ritual action is something that I realised on my solitary, that actually acting out things that you realise, makes, especially in front of the shrine, it makes a big difference to just thinking about it, or feeling about it. I kept this diary of my solitary, and sometimes, if I knew I was going to be keeping something, even for myself, if I could write it out in big letters and stick it on the shrine, well, in way it was sort of saying, well, yes, I did think that, I did feel that, and not try

and hide it, but actually putting it in front of the shrine and even reading it out, it made a lot of difference from just thinking it.

S: Yes. I do know that in the case of Vangisa's funeral ceremony, his wife and his sons were greatly helped and supported, even just days after he had died, by the fact that that ceremony was held and they could experience the support of the all the people present. It helped them quite a lot - Marie and her son. They wrote to me to that effect and asked (unclear) personally. She was really grateful for that. So, I mean, these thoughts have been in the back of my mind for a long time about departed friends and relations and mourning and all that. It did strike me that we should, sort of, in a sense, use the *Parinirvana* commemoration in this sort of way, for this sort of purpose. Especially those who have actually lost friends and relatives, something goes very deep, deeper than they acknowledge, so we need to do something.

Vidyasri: It seems good to link that up with the *Parinibbana* where - OK the Buddha's body has sort of passed away, but actually he passed into the unconditioned, so it's sort of linking up like your sense of loss, which is quite attached and so on, with something much bigger than that, which is free of that.

S: Yes. It brings it into a larger framework which thereby helps you to acknowledge. And also, reflect, as the Buddha asked Kisagotami to reflect, that loss is common to everybody; we all have to lose those who are near and dear to us: it is part of human life itself. So if we realise that, well, even the Buddha had to die, what to speak of us ordinary, unenlightened mortals; even the Buddha was subject to death - everybody is subject to death - it's natural that we should lose, but we're probably not the only ones who lose people, everybody loses those who are near and dear to them at some time or other. It's a common loss. So this helps us to feel a solidarity with all other human beings. We all have to suffer; we all feel. So as I said, we can feel our solidarity much more perhaps, with other human beings, reflecting in this way, or reflecting that human beings have to suffer enough anyway: why should we inflict more suffering on other human beings by our own behaviour? They have enough to bear as it is. (Pause)

Anyway let's leave it there. So, I haven't yet worked out anything in detail but I hope that when the time comes all of your respective centres.....

[End of tape seven tape eight]

Note from the transcriber (Silabhadra): *The recording quality of this whole seminar has been poor, mainly, I think due to very poor recording equipment and bad positioning of what seems to be just one microphone. From now on it gets much much worse to such a point that I have wondered whether it is worth continuing with the seminar - something that has very very rarely been done. Please read what follows bearing in mind that it has been checked against the original tapes at least three times and there is little chance of anything better ever being produced. Once the seminar has been recorded badly on the actual seminar there is little possibility of being able to hear clearly, at a later date, what was said.*

S: Any questions? Anything that wasn't clear? (Pause)

Sanghadevi: We had a discussion about devas. (Laughter) Well, where the ones were that were free from attachment and why ...

S: Which one...?

Sanghadevi: I was taking it that they were the ones that were enlightened ... in devalokas.

S: (Echo prevents clarity) ... It depends how one understands this expression 'free from attachment'. Because one can stay free from attachment in a sort of mundane sense. Do you see what I mean? In the sense that one can (unclear) self-control, to be really (unclear) is therefore ... free from attachment.

Sanghadevi: But what about human beings who have become stream-entrants? If they choose to be reborn in devalokas.

S: Well they don't choose to be reborn. I mean, according to tradition, one is reborn in a devaloka. There's a whole series of devalokas (unclear) rupadevaloka, and arupadevaloka only as a result of intensive practise of meditation.

Sanghadevi: Yes, I see. I mean (unclear) stream-entrant and devaloka; they become stream-entrants...

S: The Pali scriptures do record cases of devas, as devas, becoming stream-entrants. There's a class of beings called the '*anagamins*', the 'non-returners', they are said to be reborn at the top, so to speak, of the rupadevaloka in a the special type of heaven called a 'pure abode', but they are rather an exceptional case. They normally (unclear) stream-entry and they are reborn as a human being (unclear). But, yes, the Pali Canon does record instances of devas becoming stream entrants. (unclear) Why did you think of that point? (unclear) ..

Sanghadevi: (unclear) devas were free from attachment (unclear) if they were advanced.

S: Well, one has to remember that it's usually considered that when a Buddha actually appears in the world, everything changes: even the devas have a chance. The Buddha is said to be a teacher of devas and men, so this fact, if anything, means that the devas also can benefit from the teaching (unclear)

Vidyasri: Also, are there two kinds of Devas? Like, sort of, devas who are stuck in a 'devaloka', in a way, and then people, when they are evolving, a sort of equivalent to the dhyanas, that you are actually evolving and progressing, but that you pass through the devalokas?

S: I don't think it's ever said that the devas cannot gain enlightenment, but only that it is very difficult, if you are living in a devaloka, or have been reborn as a deva in a devaloka, just because conditions are so pleasant. But as I said, as far as a Buddha (unclear) ... even as a deva, or even the son of a deva; just as of the son of a man. (unclear)

Sridevi: Isn't there a contradiction there? If you said that, through intense meditation practice, you are born as a deva, and if it's difficult then to gain Insight ...

S: Yes, because the pleasant experiences in the devaloka, as a result of your practise of meditation, are so intense you just don't want to go any further, you're absorbed in them. It needs the Buddha, so to speak, to ask you. Try to understand either literally or metaphorically, or both.

Sridevi: But is it like one mustn't get too attached to the experience?

S: Well, yes and no. I think for most people it (unclear) (Laughter) (unclear) if you do have difficulty later on here tearing yourselves away from meditation (unclear).

_____ : It seems to be quite an important question (unclear) emotionally to be quite an

important thing to feel it like that.

S: Like what?

_____ : Well, somehow becoming open, free, um, experiencing more and more expanded blissful states and they can...

S: Yes, but the emphasis is on through, not settling down in. (Pause) So one needs just to remain mindful, and to say to oneself well, this may be very blissful, it may be very pleasant, it may be very enjoyable, but there is still craving (unclear) ... living in spiritual community you sort of settle down to that, so you don't make much more effort.

_____ : (unclear)

S: (unclear)

Sanghadevi: I was talking to (unclear) and he was asking (unclear) and from that ... that there were the stream-entrants, the once-returners, and the non-returners ... (Traffic noise obscures)

S: Did choose?

Sanghadevi: Well, I mean it's more likely that a stream entrant (unclear) .

S: Well, if, for instance, a stream-entrant had a choice, presumably they'd choose to be reborn as a human being, that being an even more favourable state (unclear)

Sanghadevi: Yeah ...(unclear)

S: Yes.

Sanghadevi: ...

S: Well, perhaps, it can happen that way, generalising (unclear). but the emphasis (unclear) ... human state. Not that there (unclear) any other state but the human state is definitely more favourable. (Pause)

Sridevi: Could one think that there are no (unclear) stream-entry? [*Laughter*]

S: One might reverse this to say that each reflects the deva realms; there aren't any human births (unclear) (Laughter) It did say certainly in the Pali texts, that when human beings cease to practise the precepts and meditate the ranks of the devas are depleted and they are more likely then to be overcome by the asuras. So the devas have a sort of vested interest in human beings following the Buddha, at least that is to say following an ethical path, a spiritual path.(unclear)

_____ : I was wondering how (unclear) those realms, um (unclear)..

S: Well these are accretions very common; you don't really find them in major religions, but in all almost (unclear) devas (unclear) ... devas (unclear) ... hierarchy. (Long Pause)

Vidyasri: Something that struck me very much in this chapter was the kindness of both Ananda and the Buddha, and the compassion that the Buddha showed to Ananda, but also the kindness that Ananda showed to all those other people seemed to come out very much, like Ananda sort of when

Upavana did find the Buddha and the Buddha asks him to move aside and Ananda says, "Oh, no, don't do that, you might hurt his feelings; why are you saying that?" And although he's kind of over-sensitive, it seems he's very kind, he kind of thinks of other people's feelings. (Pause)

S: Mm. Yeah. I touched on this in my lecture, didn't I, "A Case of Dysentery".

Vidyasri: I haven't heard your lecture; other people have.

S: I dwelt on that quite strongly.

Vidyasri: Yeh. And again, it seems to draw out the humanness, and the transcendental, like, the sort of first paragraph that says all the truly flowering (unclear) ... and then there's this kind of very human interaction between the Buddha and Ananda, and...

S: Well, did you notice also with Ananda, he did eventually express, Subhadda was able to have that interview with the Buddha, in the next paragraph; and also it shows - well, if one can speak of the Buddha being persuaded, it was due to Ananda's persuasion that women were allowed to Go Forth. So, perhaps it's not surprising that in the medieval period of Indian Buddhism, Ananda was regarded as the patron, so to speak, of the bhikkunis, and when there was a grand religious procession, the bhikkunis always carried the image of Ananda, in the same way that the sramaneras carried the image of Rahula and the bhikkhus carried the image, I think it was Mahakashyapa, but the bhikkunis always carried the image of Ananda.

Vidyasri: We were wondering what it was, like, did things often happen, that say Mahaprajapati Gotami asked the Buddha, and first of all he said "No", but then when Ananda intercedes, he said "Yes", and that seems to happen not just with that question, but with other questions and what it is in Ananda that then changes the Buddha's mind or his approach, or...

S: Well, one has, presumably, to remember that in the ordinary sense Ananda was very close to the Buddha; it's almost as though they go through a little game together. The Buddha wants to show that, well the matter is to be taken seriously, whatever it is, so he doesn't persuade all the time, but Ananda urges the Buddha, but even then the Buddha doesn't (unclear). Ananda urges yet again, so one might be sure that if it was absolutely out of the question, and if would have been a really unskillful thing for the Buddha to have (unclear) he wouldn't have (unclear) but at the same time, presumably he wants to show that the matter is serious, or is to be taken seriously, therefore he doesn't give way all at once. So Ananda's part, Ananda's role, seems almost to draw the Buddha out, to give the Buddha the opportunity, of well, yes, of agreeing to the request, but at the same time of showing that it is a serious matter that he is being asked about, and not something that he can just agree to immediately.

Voices: Yeh.

S: But there is this sort of, almost dialectical 'play' between the Buddha and Ananda. I mean, well, you can hardly imagine Ananda persuading the Buddha into something against the Buddha's better judgement: that is quite inconceivable.

Vidyasri: Right. Right.

S: So what was the reason for this little sort of exchange between them?

Vidyasri: Because it's very apparent; it does happen quite often.

S: Yes. Yes. Ananda is always quite persistent.

Vidyasri: And also Ananda seems to be very human, (Laughs) Ananda; we kind of wondered whether... he almost seems to represent that within the sutras, that, just that, the human element, and the Buddha's link with the human, although he is a stream-entrant, so he's actually more evolved than we are.

S: It's almost as though, in a way, Ananda's attitude very often anticipates the Mahayana way of looking at things. Not finally but just his whole attitude, much as you say, with his kindness and consideration for people.

_____ : At the Convention, in your talk, "A Case of Dysentery", something to do with communication, that the enlightened experience needs to communicate itself, and it seems to be through Ananda, sometimes it (unclear) and just following on from your comment about Ananda's attitude (unclear) the Mahayana. , um ... Well, Ananda he seems a bit like the archetypal disciple and it seems to me that it isn't just a case of the Buddha and Ananda, even when the Buddha is saying to Ananda, 'Don't mourn and lament about my going; didn't you realise all things are Unconditioned?' He's saying it to Ananda, but it's going much further than that: Ananda seems to be there so that the Buddha (Laughs) can tell him things!

S: Yes. Well, it's a bit like what they call in India, 'scolding the daughter to teach the daughter-in-law' (Laughter). Do you know about this?

Voices: No.

S: Well, in India, as you know, when you get married, as a general rule, you are taken to your husband's house; this is of course the house of his parents, so you, as a new daughter-in-law, are under the control of your mother-in-law, that is to say, your husband's mother, and you have to be very careful to please her and do everything according to her wishes. Even your own husband can't control the mother-in-law. You are absolutely under her control - which is very good for you, (unclear) it's part of the experience. But a good mother-in-law understands that the daughter-in-law (unclear) even though she may want to do everything right, she may make many mistakes; so if she does make a mistake, the mother-in-law doesn't scold her - because she doesn't want to make her feel upset or ashamed - she scolds her own daughter, with whom there is no possibility of any misunderstanding. For instance, if the daughter-in-law is cooking say, rice in the wrong way - that is to say, not in the way that the mother-in-law cooks it! - the mother-in-law doesn't say anything to her; she shouts to her daughter: 'Why do you cook the rice in that way? Why did you put all the curry in that way? You know, we never do it like that in this house'. And the daughter-in-law hears that (Laughter) and takes the point. And does better next time. So this is called 'scolding the daughter to teach the daughter-in-law'. (Laughter) So the Buddha does almost the same thing. Ananda's very close to him. He can say anything to Ananda. So he says to Ananda "Don't mourn, do you not know I will die one day". So, though he is speaking to Ananda, it is meant to be heard by others as well. It is meant that they, too should take note.

I mean, this sort of technique is still used in Buddhist circles, in Zen circles. For instance, there was a very worthy couple, went out - they were connected with the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara - went out to Japan, to visit an Englishwoman who was staying at a Japanese monastery, Zen monastery, in Japan. Well they visited Japan, so they went to call on her, and they called on the Abbot, and they said, when they came back, they were really surprised how the Abbot was always scolding her, for doing everything wrong, so they reported this, well so and so was staying at that Zen monastery, the Abbot was always scolding her, and when we were there he was telling her off like anything. (Laughter) So I heard all this, but it occurred to me that actually he wasn't scolding her at all: his

remarks were meant for the two visitors (Laughter) but they didn't know that! (Loud laughter). So they came back and they were saying that the Abbot was very displeased with her and was scolding her a lot even when they were present. (Laughter) It shows how much one has to be on the alert (Laughter) and realise for whom it is really meant.

Vidyasri: But often it's easy to go to the other extreme and think that everything is directed to you! (Laughter) ... it's not, always.

S: Oh, yes. (unclear) .

Vidyasri: Also, I mean, Ananda doesn't gain enlightenment until the Buddha has passed away. And that just intrigues me, in a way, that he's living with the Buddha, and he's so close to the Buddha, and like he's practising and ...

S: (interrupting) I mean, you could look at it, again from this point of view - that Ananda represents the more Mahayana Buddhist attitude, he wasn't so concerned to make further progress for himself, he was concerned with serving the Buddha, concerned with making it possible and easy for people to see the Buddha, he was more concerned with those things. One could look at it in that sense. He was on the path, he wasn't going to fall back, he gained arahantship, we're told, after the Buddha's parinirvana. But then this gives quite a different effect. (long pause)

_____ : (unclear) that like the Buddha's saying that (unclear) is to actually practise his teachings no matter how conventional you are, that (unclear)

S: Clearly the Buddha is not saying that devotional feelings or expressions of devotional feelings are wrong, but he's suggesting that they aren't very meaningful unless backed up by actual practise of the Dharma (Pause).

_____ : I've just been reminded, I think it's something (unclear) just said, (unclear) that one enlightened being stays a teacher if one remains only a teacher. (Pause)

S: Well, one might say he stays a teacher even less if one remains only a devotee.

Anoma: I find it hard to understand how somebody could remain a devotee. If you were devoted you'd feel that that would inspire you to action (Laughs).

S: In India for instance one gets a lot of this sort of sentimental pseudo devotion; it's not the real thing, even though the (unclear) but you get it in the *Madhyamika* (unclear) sort of devotion towards (unclear).

Anoma: You used to talk about Buddhism in Zen schools, just devotion, um (Pause)

S: Mm. I normally do distinguish between 'devoted' and the 'committed' - when I distinguish in that way I mean by that, yes, someone likes 'the Friends' very much, the Friends activities. They like to help 'the Friends', do things for us, but not to the actual point of changing themselves; it's a sort of intermediate thing. We do have quite a few Friends we find very much on the fringe of the Movement, very much devoted, they like to help, but they don't so much want to change their own individual lives. They are quite clear about that, they don't want to change, but they are very ready to help, they are devoted to us in that sense.

Vidyasri: Do you think if somebody was devoted and they followed that through, throughout the years and gave a lot, and helped a lot that that would automatically change and start becoming more

of ...

S: I think if they kept it up, it would.

Vidyasri: It would. Just that act itself would change them.

S: I think if they were around for you to encourage them, otherwise they'd carry on decade after decade after decade and never come to the point of wanting to change themselves. It's almost as though they are happy for you to live out their spiritual lifestyle, like the lay people with regard to the bhikkhus (unclear). They're happy for you doing it for them. (Pause)

Vidyasri: That seems to be an important point with regard to respect and veneration, that the link between the fact that although you respect and venerate, that you yourself move firmly towards that, and that it doesn't remain split off.

S: Right. I came up against this sort of thing many times in the East. Sometimes with regard to quite simple matters. For instance I used to have discussion quite often with Thai or Sinhalese bhikkhus about vegetarianism, so I was putting to them that they should be vegetarian. So they would say things like, "Oh, it's very easy for you to be a vegetarian, you are so strong-minded". So I would say, "Well, no, I'm not that very strong-minded, no more strong-minded than you are". And then they'd say, "Ah, well, we have been brought up in a meat eating country, we have been eating chicken and pork all our lives, I used to say, "Well, so was I brought up in a meat-eating country, I was eating meat and liking it! (Laughter) and was still (unclear) So their attitude to it was I was very strong-minded; they respected me for that but they couldn't possibly be expected to be strong-minded, they couldn't change, they couldn't become vegetarian, so they were just prepared to respect me for being vegetarian, And that is the attitude of lay people generally towards bhikkhus in the East - that the bhikkhus do what they - the lay people - couldn't possibly do; couldn't even think of doing. So their sort of view was simply to support the bhikkhus in their effort, rather than to make an effort themselves. So they lead a Buddhist life in a vicarious sort of way. The bhikkhus do it for them. So for that reason they are very keen on keeping the bhikkhus up to scratch. They keep careful watch over the bhikkhus, and they criticise them, especially if they are making offerings, because then if the bhikkhu isn't up to scratch, the offering doesn't have so much value, and not so much merit as (unclear) so it's not such a good investment, as it might have been (laughter). You see what I mean? One gets all these sort of things.

So one can't be a Buddhist at second-hand. You can't practise vicariously, you've got to practise for yourselves. No one else can do it for you. So you can't strictly speaking, be a Buddhist and just a devotee. To be a Buddhist you have to practise everything (unclear). You can't merely just force spiritual practice and be a Buddhist in that sense.

_____: I remember reading in I think it was the "Going for Refuge" pamphlet where you were talking about devotional (unclear) to an ideal and that - what you just said is, I presume must be different from the fact that you can be emotionally moved by something and not really know what it is.

S: Yes. When I say the devotion (unclear) to an ideal, I mean, really giving oneself, not merely expressing one's devotion with flowers and candles but without really giving of oneself. (Pause)

Anoma: Sometimes when I've worked outside in temporary work, I've come across people who've heard what I was doing and said to me oh you're lucky you can do that. Not necessarily to do with any higher things particularly. It was almost I couldn't see why they couldn't do what I was doing. They seemed to think that I had some special thing going (laughs).

S: Well that sort of excuses them, lets them off the hook, they think you have some special quality, some special endowment, some special advantage, a better start than they have.

_____ : Also there is the idea that somebody has to stay home and work (unclear)

S: Well, somebody has to make sure that new beings are still coming into the world. This is a point that's been made to me quite recently by two or three people. (unclear) (Laughter)

_____ : I think you've got to be very careful. I was talking to someone like that - that you don't actually get caught out in the problem that they present, and try and make it (Voices and laughter obscuring words).

S: It's my problem, it's their problem.

_____ : Yes.

S: I remember in this connection with a woman I knew who had a problem. She was trying to make her problem, my problem, - "If I don't leave my husband I'll go mad. I've really got to leave my husband". I said, "Well go ahead, leave your husband". "Ah, but I can't do that, if I leave my husband, he just won't survive, he'll collapse, and I can't allow that to happen". So I said, "All right, in that case, stay with your husband". - "Oh, I can't I'll go mad". (Laughter). So yes they try to catch you in that way, so I say well you have to make up your mind, make a choice between allowing your husband to collapse or going mad yourself! (loud laughter). (unclear) maybe your husband wouldn't collapse if you left him". "Oh, he would, he would". She never put it to the test. (Laughter).

Anoma: That thing about people just being used to somebody else. It seems that it's important for us to try and encourage people, to try and make them see if they can completely withdraw from (unclear)

S: I wonder if they genuinely think that they can't. I sometimes wonder (Pause). Are they really quite honest when they say (unclear) you can (unclear) and we can't because we are so weak. Do they really believe that? Or is it an excuse?

_____ : Sometimes.

S: Yes but I'm suggesting that maybe, in some cases, they don't.

_____ : But it's almost as if (unclear)

_____ : (unclear) the opposite.

S: Perhaps to avoid an argument - "You have the capacity, I haven't" - Well, that rules out any question of - "Why don't you also". You avoid that. (unclear)

_____ : (unclear)

Sanghadevi: I've had an experience (unclear) just sort of laid about what I was saying (loud laughter) And I just started trying to answer these questions back on the terms he was giving them, and I suddenly realised that he just wasn't interested in changing and he was just trying to provoke me. I asked him about (unclear) and said 'oh, he was just joking, but I had a feeling that I'm not sure

that it genuinely was that or that he was just trying to provoke me. He seemed to have a lot of emotional energy.

S: What did he expressly react towards to?

_____ : It was you and your (unclear) what right have you (unclear) (Loud laughter).
(unclear)

S: I think that's quite an interesting question. Well why has one? It's a free country and one can say what one likes! [Laughter] I've got as much right to stand up and say what I say as he has to object to my saying it!

_____ : Well why did he want to come?

S: He could walk out in the middle if he wanted to. (unclear) [Laughter] (unclear) They were in the wrong meeting (unclear) [Laughter] About halfway through they realised it wasn't the right meeting [Laughter] and they all very quietly left.

_____ : I felt like he'd probably been threatened by some of things you were saying about the family. I felt that was what was underlying it. (unclear)

S: The fact that he put it in that way - 'what right have I to say those things', not that 'I disagree with what you've said for such and such reasons', but what right have you to say those things. Because when you put it in that way it suggests that what has been said has got a sort of hold on you.

_____ : (unclear)

S: He might as well say well does one have to right to say anything? If you disagree well it can't be helped. (unclear) [Long Pause]

Any other points?

_____ : We had a discussion which wasn't connected with that particular topic.
(unclear) if they'd been Christian (unclear)

S: It depends. They might find it very upsetting. On the other hand (unclear) someone is doing something (unclear) Christianity. It is very difficult to say. (unclear) On the other hand (unclear). They'd be glad that someone was reading from some sort of holy book (unclear).

_____ : It seems difficult in that kind of situation to connection one's own practice as Buddhists with the practice of Christianity (unclear)

S: And yet the question if you are a Christian (unclear).

[Audibility of tape getting much worse!]

_____ : I think people were saying that anybody, when they die, these archetypal images come up, is that so?

S: (unclear)

_____ : So are you saying when they have actually died, would it help them to recite the root

verses for instance or...

S: I think it would in the sense that your intention was (unclear) They might experience the void in a different way from what you would experience it. They might translate it into their own terminology. They might see some angelic forms. As you might. (unclear)

[End of side one side two]

S: I mean Christians can be very tactless at the moment of death and can try to convert these people, and can cause them great pain in fact. So we have to be very, very careful, very patient, and very very aware and very sensitive to the dying person's actual needs, (unclear) try not to be controversial - after all one wants them to die in peace.

_____: Do you think it would help them to let go of fear.

S: Oh yes, one can just reassure and say well there's nothing for you to fear, just let go, just surrender yourself. (Pause) And they can rest assured that you are there and that you will stay with them, you won't leave them, sometimes people need that sort of reassurance.

_____: (unclear)

S: You won't leave them so long as they are still alive. You'll remain there with them. Some people are afraid of dying alone, being left, being deserted.

_____: I remember writing to my father a couple of years ago; I was quite concerned that I might die before my parents - and because they were Catholics, that they might try and give me a Catholic funeral, and I was trying to (unclear)

S: You know how to make sure of that.

_____: Make a will.

S: And you have to appoint an executor.

_____: But he also wrote back and said, well, he wouldn't want to give me a Catholic funeral, not only because it was obviously so against my beliefs, but also it would be against Catholic beliefs as well - as I hadn't been a practising Catholic - but also then he did make the point quite strongly, that if he was to die, he would want me present at his funeral. It seems to be quite an important thing for him.

S: Yes.

_____: It has been quite difficult to reconcile your being a Buddhist with all the other people who would be Christians, around the dying person and know how to.....

S: Well, if there are a lot of other people - you just have to be there and be unobtrusive - just try to contribute to a positive atmosphere just by your presence. Perhaps it serves as a sort of hint that you shouldn't leave these things to the last moment. Maybe open up some sort of dialogue with our friends, our Buddhist friends, or our relations, long before the time of death arrives, so that some understanding has already been arrived at. (Pause) Otherwise you might be starting to talk to some dying relation about Buddhism, and he or she says, "Oh, I didn't know you were interested in Buddhism". (Laughter) You see what I mean? It can happen. (Long Pause). Did any other points

emerge?

Sanghadevi: We were talking about the Holy Places. I sometimes feel we miss out on that over here in the West, that apart from our own centres and shrines that we create we haven't got any stupas or relics, or anything in our - as we walk down the road - that can remind us of (unclear)

S: No doubt we will have a stupa for (unclear) [Pause] I did visit a few years ago, the stupa the Japanese erected outside Milton Keynes which was quite interesting. It was quite beautiful. When I walked around it I found all the inscriptions were in Japanese, and not a single one in English, not a word in English, which seemed rather odd. But the stupa itself was quite good. (unclear) As I was sort of walking around it, an Englishman got out of his car, came up the steps and asked me if I knew what it was, so I said it was a Buddhist monument and left it at that. But there wasn't a word in English to say what it was. The Buddha figure doesn't look like a Buddha figure - the main one - because it is the infant Buddha - it shows a sort of Western standard sort of short, plump, figure. (Noise of plane overhead obscures words). ?? I think if it was a cross legged figure in meditation posture, maybe some people would recognise it as Buddhist. (Pause).

_____ : I get the impression it was (unclear)

S: Ah. (Laughter) A Japanese style (unclear) (Laughter). Again, no doubt, it was well-meaning, it was constructed with the best of intentions but not in any great sense of communicating the Dharma.

Sanghadevi: It's quite odd that. I thought that was part of the point of building the stupas, that they would help to communicate.

S: It was for peace, world peace, but there were notices, all in Japanese. I assume it was Japanese, I can't really distinguish between Japanese and Chinese, but you know what I mean - it certainly wasn't English.

Vidyasri: But that almost seems in line with the Nicheren monks, that when - I haven't seen them for years, but at *Pundarika*, when they were around, they didn't make an effort to translate what they were doing to people; they seemed quite happy to just bang their drums, and chant their chants, and not explain to people -

S: I found exactly the same thing in Bombay years and years ago, before I came back to England; because the Nicheren monks own a temple there - and there they were banging away on the drum and chanting, "Namyé Ho Rengye Kyo" which is Japanese, and there were these Indians and they were Buddhists, also "Namyé Ho Rengye Kyo", so I asked some of them what is this you're chanting? Do you know what I mean? and they said - "No, they hadn't got any idea of what it means". (Laughter) And that monk had been there for about twenty years - banging the drum and chanting, "Namyé Ho Rengye Kyo" and he'd never explained to them what it meant, ever! So I gave a talk in their temple, well over twenty years ago, and explained that "Namyé Ho Rengye Kyo" meant "Salutation to the White Lotus Sutra". "What was the White Lotus Sutra?" So I explained all about that, and the Parables of the White Lotus Sutra, and they were astonished and they said, "Well, the monk never explained anything like this ever - they were just banging the drums and 'chanting Namyé Ho Rengye Kyo'." (Laughter) So no doubt it was a worthy effort, it was better than nothing, but.....

Vidyasri: Do you think that had an effect on them, the fact that they'd done it for twenty years without knowing what it meant? Do you think that had an effect on them?

S: I assume that the monk knew what it meant in Japanese, and he knew a little Hindi, but he made no attempt to communicate anything of the teaching to any of those people.

Vidyasri: But that mantra - would it work if people don't know what it means at all, have no idea of what it means?

S: I doubt it - because surely you would want to know what it meant.

Vidyasri: Well yes. I would have thought so.

S: Surely, you know, you'd want to find out. They had a vague idea it was something holy I suppose, (unclear)

Vidyasri: It seems a bit mindless. (Pause)

Sridevi: They're going to build a stupa like that in Finland, Helsinki. I wonder what are your feelings about the Friends participating in opening the stupa?

S: I don't see any point in our participating. I'm not against people (unclear) but I think we've got better things to do. I think we've still got the Dharma as a chief means of teaching. (Pause)

Sridevi: It might be an opportunity to spread the Dharma, if you gave a talk at the occasion when it.....

S: Well, I mean, if they understood Finnish - because the Japanese who come over to England many people do not understand English perfectly - they just manage with a few words, and carry on in Japanese.

Sridevi: But I was wondering if the Friends participated when it was opened, then somebody from the Friends actually gave a talk.

S: No. It doesn't work like that - because some of our Friends have participated in some of their events - like Subhuti - No, they just don't give you any chance to say anything. They have their own people from Japan saying everything, mainly in Japanese! *[Laughter]* Oh no, they're not interested in indigenous Buddhists, especially not guests. No - they're not interested. (Pause)

Liz: When we drove past in sight of that stupa at Milton Keynes and I got a real flood of excitement at seeing it, I suppose - such a big monument to an Ideal that I believed in in - it was really exciting to see that in this land. Just as the LBC is as well - the Centre.

S: Oh, yes. Indeed! A bigger one!

_____: Yes. You don't notice that. But when I come to London I get a big flood of excitement just going up Roman Road.

S: You can even see it from the train. That's why I'm really keen. We have that gilded pinnacle as soon as possible, and a stupa-like structure. I think that's quite important. I'd consider that as five thousand pounds well spent.

_____: (Laughter) - Five thousand pounds!

S: Well I'd spend more if we had the money.

Liz: But the effect of seeing a symbol of your own ideal. I can understand that - yes, that the London Buddhist Centre should stand out as well as it can.

S: Well, I'm sure when I came back from India, it was a beautiful clear day, and the plane seemed to have a bit of time and it just flew very slowly up along the Thames as we came in from the North Sea, and I'm quite sure that we were flying so low and so slowly that if Sukhavati had had a golden pinnacle I could have seen it from the air very easily. I think if I'd had enough time and a big pair of binoculars I could have picked out Sukhavati anyway from that plane because we were following the course of the Thames. I recognised the Isle of Dogs quite easily.

Liz: Well I can sort of realise the effect of an actual symbol - I mean -

S: The size is important too.

Liz: Yes, because it's like you pass Westminster and you feel the sort of battle with Westminster and what it stands for, and you pass churches, and you feel some sort of battle with that. To actually have something that symbolises.

S: You might pass a crucifix. Well there's one at the corner of the road, isn't there, Roman Road, outside the church. Yes symbols are important. On the other hand the Dharma needs to be understood and practised to.

_____ : If we're not fed by Buddhist symbols we're fed by so many other sorts of symbols.

S: Well we have advertising instead.

Sanghadevi: I remember you saying a few years ago at the LBC, when we had a question and answer session, that one of the positive things you could say about the Hare Krishna people was that they were at least prepared to spend money on shrines mainly. (unclear)

_____ : (unclear)

S: When you think that billions are spent on armaments! Thousands of billions. And then people grudge a few thousand quid for a gilded pinnacle (Laughter).

Sridevi: It does seem important to create symbols here that we can relate to, but would you encourage people in the Friends to make pilgrimages to the places in India?

S: I wouldn't discourage them, but it's not just going on pilgrimages, it's more than that, in some cases it's less than that also, because it's also India, it's modern India - some of these pilgrimage centres are a bit of a disappointment. You see people begging, and all that kind of thing, not much of Buddhism, but sometimes, yes, in some places, you do get images that are really inspiring, and at least there's the recollection that well, here the Buddha was enlightened, or here the Buddha was born and so on. For some people that can be very uplifting, very inspiring - and sometimes they can feel they know the Buddha's background better and they can visualise the Buddha better against his original ancient Indian background, and his whole life comes more to life then.

Vidyasri: Do you think why the Buddha was saying when Ananda asks him, "What shall we do when you pass away, because before that every year we'd all come together and gather around the Buddha, and the Buddha answers that by saying there are four places that should be sacred. It seemed to me to be a mixture of - Go to those places to remind you of that thing having happened

there, and also that you'll get together, that's just like something to focus on - for them to get together.

S: Yes, you certainly do meet other Buddhists on these pilgrimages. You can make a lot of useful contacts.

Vidyasri: Yes. But do you think mainly he was suggesting to go to those places, not because the places in themselves were necessarily of.....

S: Well, no, they'd only be as it were, sacred by association.

Vidyasri: Right!

S: Not in themselves.

Vidyasri: Right.

_____ : (unclear) pilgrimages to the sacred places - with their heart.

S: Yes. Yes.

_____ : With their heart.

S: Yes. With positive emotions, not just a routine thing - not a mechanical thing.

Anoma: It seems very much, like Ananda was asking well, What are the monks going to do - they've come at the end of the rainy season to pay their respects to you. To put those devotional feelings on to you, and you're not going to be there, but it seems a good thing to do, what are they going to do with those sort of devotional feelings? So he's provided something they can do. It seems to me that out of that sort of growing - well our pujas, say, for example, that's what they provide.

S: Well, some people can be very deeply stirred by seeing for instance the house where some great poet had lived. It's the same kind of thing. There's the so-called Keats House up at Hampstead and there's the Shakespeare house - Ann Hathaway's cottage. Doctor Johnson's House in Fleet Street. It's the same sort of thing.

Sridevi: I've met a person in India who was practising Tibetan Buddhism - well he's a Westerner but he's actually in robes and he had a guru, and he was quite insistent that there's special significance in visiting these places because all the Buddhas get enlightened in Bodhgaya. I can't remember whether he said all the other places would be the same, but he, somehow....

S: Well, there is a Buddhist tradition to that effect - a rather late one - but one can't imagine the original Buddha himself, in a way, going along with that, that there are some places which by virtue of that fact, that they are such and such places you are more likely to get enlightened there. The Buddha would have been more likely to say well you can get enlightened anywhere, it depends on the effort you put into it. But if it helps someone to feel in that way, fair enough, one can't really argue about it too much, providing he doesn't insist on it in a dogmatic sort of way.

Sridevi: I think he meant that you can somehow be affected by the energies - I think I suddenly felt people's - well, it's my feeling coming and that there were lots of very devotional people expressing their devotion to the Ideal - and there you do get a lot of energy just accumulating - (Pause).

S: But what connection is that with the development of insight? That is the real question. (Pause) It may be helpful in building up devotion, but it can't do the work for you. Even under the most favourable conditions you have to make the effort. I think one has to be careful here that devotion doesn't get a little out of hand.

_____ : Tibetan Buddhists are all very very careful about how they treated books on the Dharma and I notice that here among the Friends, not that I've seen people with their feet on them, but do you think we should try to pay more reverence. ?.

S: Well, yes. But again what form does the reverence take? You see, in the East people have very strong feelings about heads and feet. In the West we don't have that. You see what I mean? So if the Westerner wanted to show reverence he wouldn't necessarily associate the showing of reverence with keeping his feet away from a sacred book. Do you see what I mean? But certainly a feeling of reverence should be there and it would need to take a particular form, but that might vary from culture to culture.

_____ : I think I would be (unclear)

S: But if you do think of the feet as dirty well one must keep them away from those things which you respect. One must follow one's own feeling in this way. (Laughter). In some traditions - for instance in the Christian tradition - if you're a man you uncover your head when you go into a church, if you're a Moslem or a Jew, you cover your head when you enter your holy place. So these are conventional ways of expressing reverence. Tibetans keep on their shoes when they enter the shrine - the Sinhalese Buddhists regard that as dreadful. Climatically if you take off their shoes to enter a shrine in Tibet you'd get frostbite! (Laughter). A Sinhalese Buddhist who wasn't very say imaginative, might say, "Look at these Tibetan Buddhists who are supposed to be very devoted, but, look, they actually wear their shoes into the shrine!". (Pause)

Vidyasri: So it always comes back to the principle.

S: Comes back to the principle.

Vidyasri: To what's behind what you're doing - not necessarily what you do.

S: I think if you've got a genuine respect for the teaching contained in a particular book, you can't treat that book carelessly or disrespectfully. You couldn't say just throw it across the room as some people do. I think you couldn't do that sort of thing.

Vidyasri: I've noticed with myself that when I've got - I've not got very many precious sort of very precious books - but when I have, and it's something that I really love and it's got very precious things inside, I just am quite careful with it and I take care of it, in a way that I don't - it's quite unconscious in a way, with my other books (Pause).

S: But the modes of showing respect are very conventional. (Pause). Normally it is good if one is going to the East to know what are the local customs and not offend people. In almost all Buddhist countries you should never point your feet at other people, and never at holy shrines or images or pictures - that's thought as quite disgraceful, and especially in Thailand, one should never touch anybody's head, that is considered very rude, even to touch his or her head even playfully, one should never do this, this is very, very insulting. The worst thing you could possibly do is touch somebody's head with your foot. That is almost a killing matter with some people. (Pause). And of course there are all sorts of conventions, manners and customs with regard to women, or limitations

as with regard to women. Women usually cover their heads very respectfully, they don't talk to unrelated men. One needs to be a bit aware of traditions and customs so that one doesn't sort of offend against them too flagrantly in the course of one's travels.

_____ : Do you think for example, the traditional attitude towards women in India would be prohibitive to women going over there?.

S: I think in some ways you might find it quite helpful. Well except that of course very often Western women aren't expected to behave like Indian women, and sometimes their Western style of behaviour is misunderstood by Indian men, so one must be careful in that respect. But if one can, anywhere, follow local customs and modes of behaviour, that is good. It's a sort of gesture of good will towards the local culture. People appreciate that you are trying to fit in, and that you respect their feelings or their way of doing things.

_____ : If you are a woman in India trying to lead a spiritual life what then?

S: Well, if you are a woman in India trying to lead a spiritual life, then people will always respect that. But it must be obvious that you are trying to lead a spiritual life and there are certain signals which are recognised in India, for instance if you are wearing a yellow robe, or your head is shaven. So if a woman is going around in a yellow robe and shaven head, people will certainly recognise her as leading a spiritual life and respect her accordingly, unless of course the Rajneesh people have been there first, because they have rather spoiled the scene, because they wear yellow robes but they do things which Indians traditionally do not expect people in yellow robes to do - so wherever they've gone they have rather spoiled this. Where they've gone there is no respect for Westerners in yellow robes.

Sanghadevi: That could have actually been misinterpreted (unclear)

S: Oh, Yes.

Sanghadevi: I have heard that Rajneesh had been upsetting people. [Pause]

S: Yes. They have upset people, very much.

_____ : You don't think there's any place for women not wearing robes but leading a spiritual life in India?

S: Well, it means what you mean by "place". If you are staying quietly at home meditating, no one is going to object to that, but if she wants Indians to treat her as a person leading a spiritual life, then she must act in such a way that they can understand that. Not act in a way that they would take as meaning that you were a very worldly person not leading a spiritual life at all. I'm speaking of the general public, not people that you get to know personally. For instance, in India, if you were anyone, whether it's a woman or a man, seen smoking a cigarette or drinking wine, they'd take it for granted that you weren't leading a spiritual life.

Vidyasri: But that's where that seems there's a difference between the East and the West in that respect, because in the West, like I've heard you say sometimes that one shouldn't just conform, you know, that in a way, you shouldn't surrender your individuality to group norms, and yet, what you are saying is in a way, that in the East, that that's more appropriate.

S: Well, there you are, as it were, just a guest. You don't belong to that society, so an ordinary person would ask well why are you out there at all? But if you are on pilgrimage. Well you haven't

gone there to decondition people, especially in India - it's a pretty big task. Many hundreds of millions very entrenched in their ways - you've gone there on a pilgrimage, and you want to be there as a pilgrim, you want as little friction over such matters with local people.

Vidyasri: But what about the Indians themselves? Do you think they also should stay within this sort of conventional

S: Well, there are some things which are very good, there are some things which are very bad. So in the course of my own work in India, especially among the ex-untouchables - there were certain Hindu customs and traditions I encouraged very much - which I admire very much - like their traditional hospitality. But there are other things which I've discouraged very much, and spoken against - like the caste system. But then I was sort of fulfilling a definite role, having a definite place and responsibility - I wasn't just a visitor.

If one thinks it's so important that one should be an individual and not go along with group norms, all right, one can do that even in India, but you have to be prepared for the consequences, and not be surprised when they come. (Pause)

I mean, for instance, it is well to follow the Indian conventions about eating - that you use your right hand for eating. They think it very bad to use the left hand. You touch food only with the right hand. They wouldn't give anybody anything with the left hand - you give only with the right hand. There are little things like this which make your visit easier and perhaps more pleasant. Also you may make friends more easily, because people appreciate that you are respecting their customs. If you feel that the custom is something which is actually unethical, then you can't be expected to go along with it, but I'm speaking just of customs which are merely customs, which don't involve natural ethical principles directly. (Pause)

Time's practically up, so any final point?

How many of you have been to India, by the way? One, two, three, four, five, six. Well, anything to relate from your personal experience about these sort of things? Conforming to manners and customs or not conforming. Or didn't you notice that they had different ones? (Laughter) It depends where you stay of course.

Sridevi: It seemed very important to try to do it but I must say I find it a bit of a strain to try and fit in. Well, clearly, it is important, but like I had -

S: What do you mean?

Sridevi: I found myself feeling all the time, am I behaving right - should I be doing this, or should I

_____ : It was a bit unfortunate with (unclear)

_____ : People getting upset after I'd finished meditating, stretching my legs out in front of me towards the shrine -

S: Ah.

_____ : I hadn't realised that

_____ : Did they tell you?

_____ : Yes.

S: Yes certain thing if they feel very strongly, they'd be deeply offended, they would have (unclear)

_____ : I'm left handed so... (unclear) (Laughter)

S: You'd have to label your left hand right.

_____ : I got it the other way round, because I was born in India and when I came back to England I remember upsetting people because I wanted to go to the toilet outside. (Laughter)

S: Some Indians get a bit upset because Westerners don't pour water over themselves every day. I won't say "take a bath", because it isn't very often actually taking a bath, they just pour water over themselves. Sometimes of course it's dirty water, but you have to do that in India. (Laughter).

_____ : I did feel when I was there that there were an awful lot of customs, and maybe it was just because they were so different to mine but I've travelled to other places and it struck me that India was really quite strong on some.

S: I remember, on one occasion, I forget where it was, but we were all eating somewhere, for some reason or other all served in Western style, and we had some Indian friends with us, whom I think had never handled a knife and fork before and they just looked at the knives and forks and spoons and they were so awkward and clumsy, that you realised that things you take for granted are very strange, new customs to them.

_____ : Right. (Pause)

S: You think, well, anyone can handle a knife and fork, but, no some of you have to learn. (Pause)

_____ : I wasn't actually trying to practise Buddhism when I was there but why I asked about that was that I found that I was really being defined in my role as a woman and I felt quite restricted in that, even though I wasn't trying to get out of it.
(Pause)

S: I think Indians of course make great allowances for visitors, for foreigners and all that, but if you want really to move with them, and mix with them, and spend time with them, make friends with them, then you need to know their manners and customs, observe them or respect them at least to some extent. That just makes social intercourse a lot easier. But if you constantly, whether consciously, or even unconsciously offending against their customs and their susceptibilities, it isn't easy for them to take you, so to speak, as one of themselves, which is what they are very willing to do very often. (Pause)

Vidyasri: Why do you think the Buddha - just going back before we finish - the Buddha pointed out the excellent qualities of Ananda and sent him to Kusinara - why does he suddenly do that - point out the excellent qualities to Ananda?

S: Well, perhaps he might have thought that people in the future wouldn't sufficiently appreciate Ananda.

_____ : Yeh.

S: Perhaps he felt Ananda was not sufficiently appreciated, even then.

_____ : Yeh.

S: Perhaps only the Buddha appreciated him. The others took him for granted. There must have been some such reason. Perhaps he wanted to comfort Ananda, so that Ananda realised that the Buddha did appreciate him. The Buddha himself, hadn't taken Ananda for granted, even though he'd been with the Buddha, day after day, for twenty years.

Sanghadevi: It seems to sort of suggest that he was to carry on, in a sense, in the way he has been behaving, in a very sort of....

S: Kindly way.

Sanghadevi: Yes. Maybe to bring those qualities out more, to show to other people.

S: Yes.(Pause)

All right, let's leave it there.

[End of tape eight tape nine]

S: So have you collected any questions? (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Where it talks about the form of shrine (unclear) was it that only people who had come from another school or whatever, tribe, so why? Was it to give them a chance to see if they might change their minds?

S: To readjust or de condition themselves. The Buddha though did make an exception in the case of those who came from the Sakyan tribe - this is according to the Vinaya. Presumably because the Buddha himself came from that community. Perhaps he had personal contact with some of those people in earlier days (unclear) That was a rule which the Buddha made, as far as we know, for the bhikkhu Sangha - that those who wanted to (unclear) but who had previously been followers of another teacher should be placed on probation so to speak. That rule seems to have been introduced a little later on, presumably when quite a lot of people started coming to the Buddha from other groups, other traditions; because Sariputra and Moggallana you may remember, were disciples of Sanjaya but when they came to the Buddha welcomed them into the Sangha immediately. There was no question of a four month trial on probation.

Anoma: But it looks as if in a way that the Buddha was prepared to do that in the case of Subhadda because it says here that Subhadda, - I presume it's that Subhadda insisted on serving the four months probation. It's as if the Buddha in a way hadn't insisted.

S: Perhaps the Buddha was testing him - Where's the passage?

_____ : (Too soft to hear).

S: He insisted on serving a four month probation and he became an Arahat.

Anoma: Is this as in the case of Kassapa? Um.

S: I'm not sure which Kassapa this refers to - there were several Kassapas. There's Maha Kassapa, there's Arya Kassapa, there's Kumara Kassapa, Uruvela Kassapa, (unclear) Kassapa, at least (Loud

Laughter).

Sanghadevi: We found out about all of them.

S: (unclear) most famous and was given to the Bhutangas(?). In the Sarvastivada tradition it is not Sariputra or Moggalana who are the chief disciples, it's Ananda and Kassapa, which is a rather interesting point perhaps. That's why in Tibetan temples where you have an image of Shakyamuni, the two Arahants on either side are not Sariputta and Moggalana, they are Ananda and Kassapa.

_____ : In which tradition is this?

S: Sarvastivadin. That being the form of Hinayana which penetrated into Tibet as part of the Mahayana tradition. It was the dominant form of Hinayana in much of India (unclear) so the Tibetan monks, to the extent that they are monks - bhikshus - they follow the Sarvastivadin version of the Hinayana; and they have Tibetan translations of Sarvastivadin versions of the Nikayas. In the Sarvastivadin tradition, they're called Agamas, the four Agamas, not the five Nikayas. (unclear)

_____ : Is it Maha Kassapa?

S: Maha Kashyapa. Yes. In a way they're an interesting sort of pair, because if Sariputta represents 'Wisdom' and if Moggalana represents, let's say, 'Power', because he was famous for his psychic powers, and Ananda perhaps represents the sort of, say, the softer more human side of the spiritual life, and Kassapa definitely represents the more strict and ascetic side. There was a bit of a clash between them, according to some sources after the Buddha's *parinibbana*, though again, according to other sources, Kassapa was only testing Ananda, because Ananda was very popular especially with the nuns and he practically took the Buddha's place after the *Parinibbana*, and according to some accounts, Kassapa wasn't very happy with that, but I don't know how we are to take that, because they were all Arahants. Apparently there was one particular Bhikkhuni who criticised Kassapa for criticising Ananda. She became very very (unclear)

Sanghadevi: What happened?

S: I forget the details. Her name was *Tula* - which means that. (unclear) (Laughter) Anyway I don't know whether the earth actually opened and she went to hell, but anyway, something dreadful happened to her from criticising Kassapa. (unclear) She contemptuously referred to Ananda as "that boy", this immature sort of person who was going around pretending to be like the Buddha, and was quite annoyed about it. (unclear) Anyway whether she really came to a terrible end we don't really know because (unclear) [Laughter]

_____ : In the Mahavastu(?) it talks about the Buddha Kassapa.

S: That must have been the previous Buddha, Dipankara or (unclear) previous historical Buddha?

_____ : So that was the one before Dipankara.

S: I don't know whether it's the one immediately before but certainly one can be reasonably confident. Reading between the lines of some of the Buddhist scriptures and traditions one can see quite a lot of sort of human interest, so to speak. There was a nun who was greedy when it came to garlic (Laughter).

_____ : What happened to her?

S: Well, it was due to her that garlic was prohibited for the whole bhikkhuni Sangha. (Laughter) A

certain lady supporter admitted her since she was rather fond of garlic with her food so that they could have a little from his garden, but she was taking so much each day that he became rather "browned off", as we say, and complained to the Buddha, so the Buddha laid down a rule which became part of the vinaya that no bhikkhuni should eat garlic in future. (Laughter). If you go and stay at a Buddhist temple or nunnery in the East and there's no garlic to flavour the food, well you'll know why. (Laughter). It's a tradition that does continue. Of course in the Mahayana garlic was prohibited for Bodhisattvas and would be bodhisattvas.

_____ : Why is that?

S: Onions too. (Laughter). Well it's obvious, the Bodhisattva wishes to be pleasing and agreeable to all sentient beings! (Laughter). So how can you be pleasing and agreeable if you are breathing garlic all over them?

_____ : Would beans come into that category? (Laughter)

S: I've sometimes thought that peanut butter did. [Laughter] It's interesting, because the Mahayana even consider apparently small things like this. Sometimes apparently even quite small things produce quite a disagreeable impression, and therefore make the person who is given that disagreeable impression less receptive to the Dharma.

Anoma: It reminds me of a mitra when he was in the States had a job as a cleaner and one of his clients told him he should use a deodorant because he was really smelling. (Laughter).

S: Americans are very, very sensitive to these sort of things. If one goes to America apparently one's natural odour is not tolerated, it has to be some recognizable brand of deodorant that you exude - (Pause).

Sanghadevi: Would some of those things be the minor precepts? Actually in the next chapter it says, the Sangha if it wished, can abolish them.

S: Yes, these are very minor precepts. The Theravada takes the view that the Buddha did not specify to Ananda which were the minor precepts, but that seems to be rather ridiculous, I mean it doesn't need the Buddha to tell you which are major precepts and which were minor ones. You ought to be able to distinguish by means of your own common sense, and that also agrees with the Mahayana.

Liz: That explains why, a lot of the precepts are so sort of minute.

S: Minute.

Liz:: Is it much more of the reason why they were there and (unclear)

S: There was a reason, originally, for all these precepts, even the most minute, whether or not we regard them as actually having been laid down by the Buddha, but times change, some precepts have changed, some of the minor precepts may not be particularly relevant. But the major ones, certainly the major ones reflect ethical principles. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: I've got the impression that within the Theravada tradition in the East at the moment, now, that they still do tend to stick to the minor ones.

S: This is true, and in many cases the minor ones are strictly observed. Which is not necessarily a

bad thing by any means, but it isn't really in accordance with the spirit of Buddhism to stress minor precepts at the expense of major ones, or to attach undue importance. In most Theravada countries they are very particular about bhikkhus eating after twelve o'clock. They don't mind how many meals they have beforehand, - it's not a question of controlling your greed, but simply of not eating after twelve o'clock. (Pause). And the Tibetans don't follow that particular tradition. The principle is clearly moderation in diet - moderation in food - moderation in eating. (Pause). If one wishes to make it a rule not to eat after a particular hour, fair enough, but the purpose of the rule, is to help one control one's desire for food, perhaps one's neurotic craving for food. You could do it the other way around. You could for instance make a vow not to eat after twelve o'clock, but not to eat before twelve o'clock. In the Sufi tradition for instance they have a practice of not eating until the evening, until after dark, which is (unclear) but the ethical value is the same; the principle is the same, in both cases, whether you limit yourself in the morning or limit yourself in the evening, it really comes to the same thing. Some people might go without breakfast and lunch; others might go without supper, and have just lunch.

Sridevi: Do you think in the East that Upasakas follow ten precepts which are different from our ten precepts?

S: Upasakas on full-moon days, follow eight precepts, which actually are nine, because two have been joined together in this case. They follow some of the precepts of the *samanera*. For instance they follow the Dikaladojana(?) precept, which means "no untimely food" - which is understood to mean no food after twelve o'clock; then they follow the precept of (Pali terms) which means not to wear ornaments, jewellery and so on for that period, then they follow the precept of (Pali Term) not to witness dance, or unseemly shows. Not to watch TV let's say. So these precepts also observed by the *samanera*. And also on that day, Upasakas will take not the precept of "*Kamesu micchachara*", but of "*abrahmacarya*". They will observe celibacy for that day. So these add up to eight precepts instead of five. There are three, though in fact, four, extra precepts, *samanera* precepts. The *samanera* precept that one is not taken by upasakas, (Pali term) which means abstaining from handling gold and silver. That one is not taken by upasakas and upasikas on full moon days. But the other nine are, the two are consolidated into one, making eight precepts - therefore it is said that on full moon and new moon days upasakas and upasikas observe the astikasila, the eight precepts, so they are these eight precepts. They've nothing to do with the ten precepts except of course that the first four are common.

Vidyasri: And the rest of the time they just have the five precepts?

S: Yes. This is in Theravada countries. They just recite the five.

Vidyasri: That's what, um, on these *vipassana* retreats people observe those nine precepts.

S: Yes. It means one is leading a simpler, and in a way, more austere life just for the day on which you take those precepts, and that's something that will help if you do it sincerely. And very often in Theravada countries upasakas and upasikas they dress in white, - the women in white saris, and men in white shirts and lunghis and go to the temple early in the morning, and they do their Ti Ratana Vandana and then they take the Astasila from the bhikkhus for that day. And they spend, very often, the day at the temple, at the vihara in the shrine room chanting or making offerings to the bhikkhus, and then maybe in the afternoon or evening there'll be a talk that they can maybe benefit by. This is a quite popular sort of observance in Theravada countries with the more serious-minded lay followers. They try to spend the whole day at the vihara or the temple on full moon days at least. Just like say, down in London people might spend a full moon day or one day at month for a day round the Centre, - a day retreat. It amounts to that, except that in their case they do just have the one meal of the day before noon like the bhikkhus. (Pause)

Sridevi: Are our ten precepts from the Tibetan tradition?

S: No! They are from the Pali tradition. They occur a number of times in the Pali Canon.

Sridevi: I think I've got confused a bit. In Buddhist temples they have ten precepts in the outer temples.

S: Those ten precepts are for the *samanera*. In Tibet the *samanera* observes those ten precepts, plus some other extra Sarvastivada precepts. At least thirty two in the case of a *samanera*. [Pause] And this also brings up the whole question of extra precepts or even vows. A few years ago there was quite a lot of interest in these vows or extra precepts among people in the FWBO. They seem to have faded away recently - I think some people came a bit of a cropper with regards some of the vows. Some people vowed to give up smoking - now they are smoking again and things like that. Some people succumbed to tea.

Anoma: I can't remember when it was but a while ago you did stress that the importance of taking vows - a vow is only a vow if it wasn't broken - that was what made it a vow - you couldn't make a vow and then break it because it wouldn't have been a vow in the first place; and you were really stressing that and I think that's probably why there haven't been so many.

S: Well, I didn't mean that - you only knew in retrospect whether a vow was a vow.

Anoma: (Breaking in) No - but when you actually made it.

S: But when you actually make it you must make it with a full determination that you just cannot break it. So people seem not to have done that and in many cases seem to have made vows quite sort of almost rashly. A few did keep their vows but quite a lot of people didn't. So I haven't been stressing vows recently. I think the whole question should be revived, because it means one is taking one's personal development very seriously in a concrete detailed sort of way, and then if you see that there's a certain weakness to be corrected, well then you make a vow, relevant to that particular weakness. Or if you see that there is a particular quality you especially need to develop, a vow doesn't necessarily relate to something you want to give up, it can also relate to something you want to develop. Some people do make vows that they will do a certain meditation, let's say, every day without fail for a year. Such vows some people have kept or that they will get up by a certain hour every morning and meditate. Such vows are quite constructive.

Vidyasri: Do you think it would be wiser to not take a vow, but to take a resolution?

S: Well, I think it really amounts to the same thing. If you distinguish between a resolution from a vow, in a way you are accepting that you might not keep it. If you start off thinking you might not keep it I think the battle is half lost already before you begin.

Anoma: When the question came up before when somebody asked about mitras taking vows. What do you think about that?

S: Yes. I wasn't very keen on mitras taking vows especially when I saw even Order members couldn't keep them. So concentrate on observing at least the five precepts. And extra vows, if needed, extra precepts if needed. (Pause) But it does suggest a sort of certain degree of self-knowledge - also I suggested that if people sort of announced their vows in the context of a centre or community puja - preferably a community puja, so that other people would know about them would help them to observe it, not make it difficult for them to observe it, or help them to observe

it. (Pause) If someone for instance, made a vow to get up early every morning, well help them if you can by giving them a call, giving them a cup of tea in bed twenty minutes before, or if they vow to give up smoking, and if you haven't given up smoking, not smoke in front of them - things like that. (Pause)

I think vows and extra precepts are a very good thing. They are to be done after due thought. Quite a few people took up the Going for Refuge and Prostration practice but didn't keep it up. So now they ask people to do it for a month (unclear) before finally deciding to do it, because it is quite a shame if you take up something and don't carry on with it. (Pause)

Viv: Yes, because obviously it has some sort of effect upon you, the fact that you've made a vow and you break it.

S: Because lack of consistency shows you a very unintegrated person. One sort of "I" has made the vow, and the other "I" comes along and breaks it. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Where the Buddha's hearing Subhadda's question about teachers and followers, and Buddha says where you find the Noble Eightfold Path that's where you'll find stream-entrants. We were just wondering how much - I mean - it has to be the Noble Eightfold Path which is quite set out in a way we can (unclear) it.

S: I'd say not necessarily. I would say not necessarily, because the spirit of it, so to speak, is set out in other ways, in other (formulations) of the Pali Scriptures, I mean the Buddha himself did not always speak in terms of the Noble Eightfold Path - he sometimes spoke in terms of the seven *Bodhiangas*; he sometimes spoke in terms of the seven *visuddhis* - he spoke in terms of *sila*, *samadhi*, *prajna*, and *vimutti*. So it's not so much that particular formulation of the Path that is meant here but the Path in principle, as it were. That there is no liberation, there's no genuine spiritual attainment unless in your spiritual life you have some experience of the kind of things which are reflected in these different formulations of the path. There must be some vision; there must be some transformation of the whole being. There must be a bringing of thought and speech and mind in what you see and there must be positive emotion; there must be integration, otherwise no spiritual life. I don't think one can say that unless someone can reel off all the steps on the Noble Eightfold Path they're not on the spiritual Path, no! I think one does have to think (unclear) understanding quite deeply what that spirit consists in.

_____ : And apply that as well. The spirit (unclear)

S: If one wishes so to do. (unclear) (Long pause)

Sanghadevi: It says he declined to comment on the teachings but then (unclear) in the way that he deals with it, by the end he is actually being quite uncompromising.

S: Categorical. Well, he's giving Subhadra a criterion. Well this is the essence of it, are they on the Noble Eight-fold Path or not? If they are? well yes they will be capable of producing stream entrants, if not they will not be so capable. That is the simple criterion. There must be something corresponding to the Noble Eightfold Path. Maybe not expressed exactly in those terms, but expressed in other terms; but amounting substantially to much the same thing. (Pause)

_____ : It reminds of the of the *Kalama Sutta*.

S: Yes. Also perhaps we mustn't forget that the Buddha was about to gain *Parinibbana*, perhaps he was physically quite weak, perhaps he wasn't able to say very much; so he didn't want to get into a

long discussion about the pros and cons of the teaching and other schools.

_____ : I was just going to ask about a minor point in that passage where presumably when he's talking of the first, second, third and fourth (unclear) that means stream-entrants etc.

S: Yes - in other words he's saying only where there is a path - like the Noble Eightfold Path, or analogous to the Noble Eightfold path is there genuine spiritual (unclear) . This is what he is saying.

Anoma: He also, like Subhadra had asked if any of the teachers had a partial understanding and he seems to imply that there isn't such a thing. You've either got the path of vision and transformation or you haven't - you can't have a bit of it.

S: From what he says elsewhere, it would seem that he regarded all six of the other famous teachers of his age as being totally mistaken. Oh yes. We know roughly what they taught. Some of their teachings were very bizarre indeed. (Pause)

Liz: Bhante, do you know what the ways of address to be used as amongst the bhikkhus - we were taking about -

S: Apparently, for the greater part of the Buddha's career bhikkhus addressed one another as "Arusam(?)" which means Friend. This mode of address is still used among bhikkhus, but the Buddha sort of made a rule that after his demise, that junior bhikkhus should address senior bhikkhus as "Bhante" which means "reverend", not as "Arusam" which means friends. In other words should be careful to show them respect and the senior bhikkhu addresses the junior bhikkhu as "(unclear)" which means Friend. These practices are still observed among bhikkhus. For instance if I wrote to a bhikkhu who was senior to me I would write and say "Dear Bhante". If you were junior say "Arusam".

_____ : What if you weren't quite sure? [*Laughter*]

S: You always are! (unclear)

_____ : So it's senior in time?

S: Yes. It would be senior in terms of ordination, nothing more than that. You might say well supposing you are ordained at the same time as somebody else - well it's whoever is on your right is senior, whoever is on your left is junior. (Laughter)

S: So no two bhikkhus are ever exactly.... One is always senior - one is always junior.

Anoma: Isn't it to do with age, if you're going to (unclear) I thought it was to do with the most senior person was the oldest?

S: Well yes it would amount to that because they'd line you up in order of seniority.

_____ : Just as a matter of interest amongst the bhikkhunis, would the junior bhikkhuni refer to a more senior one as "Bhante", or is that purely a masculine term?

S: As far as I remember it's a purely masculine term. Bhikkhunis are usually addressed by bhikkhus and by lay people as "Bagini", "Bagini" means "sister". Literally, "a sharer", because a sister shares in the family. Though, I - ah! - there is a term, yes, there is a term - "ayya". Elder bhikkhunis, as far

as I remember - I'd have to check this - are sometimes referred to as "ayya" - which means something like, sort of "grandmother". (Loud laughter).

_____ : How do you spell it?

S: A double Y - A - in Pali. It's sometimes translated into English as "Your ladyship", which isn't really quite [Laughter] but it is a term of great respect used to older bhikkhunis. (Pause) In Tibet nuns are universally addressed as "Anila". 'Ani' means auntie and 'la' is an honorific suffix. It's honourable auntie. [Laughter] (Pause)

It must be rather nice for the nuns to be called auntie especially "honourable auntie" or "venerable auntie" (Pause). In Tibet, incidentally it's not very polite to address anybody by name. They are always addressed by a certain title. (Pause) Usually with the suffix 'la' as a sign of respect corresponding to the Indian word "ji". Broadly speaking, in the East it isn't considered very respectful to use someone's personal name - you use some kind of title. (Pause)

Vidyasri: It seems to be quite sort of significant that Subhadda was the last disciple to go for refuge with the Buddha, and that he goes for refuge knowing that the Buddha himself is passing away, so he's going for refuge to the Order, rather than sort of knowing that the Buddha's going and be there.

S: Yes. Right. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Where it says my dharma and vinaya does that mean "doctrine" and method?

S: Yes, broadly speaking doctrine and method, doctrine and discipline, theory and practice. Later on "vinaya" assumed a rather narrow meaning in the sense of the monastic discipline, even just monastic precepts in the minor sense, but very often the Buddha himself seems to have used it simply to cover the whole practical side of the spiritual life. Rather like "*vijja carana*" - in the Salutation to the Buddha, "*vijja carana sampanno*" - endowed with "*vijja*" - knowledge, and "*carana*", conduct, or "theory and practice" - "*dhamma vinaya*" corresponds to those two. "*Dhamma*" meaning "the spiritual principles", and "*vinaya*" meaning or covering application of those spiritual principles in life. (Pause)

Sanghadevi: (unclear - break in recording)

S: in some cases.

Sanghadevi: It's almost the Buddha himself had a much broader vision, you could say, when he used the word "*vinaya*" what he means by it, whereas, relatively speaking, quite soon after his *parinibbana* it became narrowed down.

S: Yes. We noticed that for instance when we went through the "*Itivuttaka*" some years ago - the last chapter was noticeably, sort of, in a way a later addition, or a development, it was noticeably drier, narrower, and more rigid than the earlier chapters which seemed to have been an earlier period of the Buddha's life. It's not quite clear why or how that happened. Though again it happened only in certain quarters.

_____ : Whereabouts does the "*pratimoksa*" fit in in relation to the Vinaya?

S: Ah. The "*pratimoksa*" is the list of one hundred and fifty, or a hundred and fifty-two precepts observed by the bhikkhus. There are two twenty seven precepts altogether, but those include rules

of what we would regard as etiquette, and also rules of collective procedure. Again I don't know (unclear)

Sanghadevi: Would they actually again be narrowed down versions of what the Buddha said?

S: Some scholars believe that the "*pratimoksa*" is the earliest form of Buddhist literature. It was one of the earliest things to be drawn up. Whether it was drawn up by the Buddha is a bit doubtful, though no doubt some of those precepts were laid down by the Buddha himself. But quite a number of the precepts of the bhikkhus, reflect quite a high degree of monastic organisation which clearly could not have existed during the Buddha's own lifetime, certainly not during the earlier part of the Buddha's career. A good book in this connection is the book "The Buddha and four after centuries". There's another one by the same author (unclear). The author is S.Dutt.

Sanghadevi: Where it talks about the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha and then weighing (unclear) is that again broadly speaking about theory and practice?

S: Ah. Yes. The Way - or the Noble (unclear) - yes, this would clearly mean the spiritual life in general. The (unclear) the magga - and the (pali term).

Vidyasri: Would that be included in the "dharma"?

S: Well, the Buddha is perhaps giving expression to the more experiential, practical part of the dharma - the vinaya, so to speak. It's (unclear) using those terms, magga and (same pali term) rather than "vinaya" in this context. Perhaps these words do reflect something of the actual sense, not necessarily the words. (the same Pali term) means, yes, mode of progress, a progressive path.

_____: (unclear)

S: Broadly speaking yes. Though there's obviously some difference otherwise (unclear).

_____: Would you say this refers back to the four grades of practice and (unclear)

S: No, I think this is the actual method of practice, not so much the attainment, which you achieve as the result of practice - (Pause). It seems that some of you need to do quite a bit of background reading. I did draw up a list of books, a reading list and some of you have got copies. Maybe I ought to bring out a revised edition. Order Members at least, should know the basic literature.

_____: (unclear)

S: (unclear) Conze. (Pause) "Early Buddhist Monachism".

_____: Who is that by?

S: It's by S Dutt. As is the other one about the Sangha and the Prattimokkha - "The Internal Policy of the Sangha". They're quite important works.

_____: Is it Buddhism and monasticism -

_____: No, "Monachism"

S: Monasticism or monachism? - It's Monachism!. Have any of you read these books?

Voices: No.

S: I think there's a lot more study needed. When Subhuti talked to some Friends earlier this year he reported a horrific ignorance. I've spoken about that already, but it's very difficult for people to understand certain aspects of the teachings without a bit of background knowledge. So if some Order members concentrated entirely. I'm not suggesting mitras need not but at least Order members, at least some Order members. If any mitras are studious, so much the better if they also read up on these things.

_____ : Do you know who has got this list?

S: A lot of copies were distributed.

S: I will look at it and revise it. But there should be copies around the LBC. They used to have them in all the bookstalls.

Liz: There are quite a lot of books now, but I don't know which ones to make for.

S: There are certain books to avoid, but I think we don't stock those now. There are a lot of very good things to read.

_____ : (unclear) the more familiar ones on that list are in the bookshop.

S: Yes. "Conze" for instance, one should read - though he's a bit quirky at times but he's very good. Who has read his "Buddhism - its Essence and Development"?

_____ : I've read "*Buddhist Thought in India*"

S: You've read "Buddhist Thought"? That's a very good book. It's a better book than "Buddhism, its Essence and Development", more difficult - but it's quite a scholarly and reliable text.

_____ :

S: Well, you've made a very good start. (Laughter).

[End of side one side two]

What have you read, what has inspired you that you go back to, again and again? Could you give me some idea - Maybe just go round from left to right. Just mention a few titles. Things you have read that have got you or things you go back to constantly.

Sanghadevi: "Songs of Milarepa" - "The Life of Milarepa" (unclear) "Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism"

S: A lot of Tibetan influences. "Mind in Buddhist Psychology" "The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhism"

_____ : Yes.

_____ : "Songs of Milarepa" and the "The Door of Liberation"

S: Ah - Yes.

_____ : "Songs of Milarepa" (Laughter)

_____ : "Way of the White Clouds" and also "Crossing the Stream".

S: Ah!

Vidyasri: "The Bodhicaryavatara" - the Mitrata's I return to a lot - "Songs of Milarepa", "The Bodhicaryavatara", - "The Sutra of Golden Light" - and now I've just been given "The Cult of Tara" and I feel that's something I'll get quite into, and "The Survey".

_____ : I'm just discovering "The Three Jewels" - I mean, I went through a period of really liking "The Life Story of Milarepa" and Padmasambhava but I haven't really read that one too much and I found that that book you wrote on "Anagarika Dharmapala", that really inspired me a lot, and I want to borrow the "Songs of the Nuns".

S: Ah - yes. "The Theri Gatha". There is a new translation by the way. I think they've got around to publishing a new translation of the Theri Gatha. You know there is an older translation by Mrs Rhys Davids of the Thera Gatha and Theri Gatha, as "Psalms of the Elder Brothers" and "Psalms of the Elder Sisters". These are very well translated from the literary point of view, but the new translation is much more helpful for getting at the actual meaning.

_____ : Who has published it?

S: The Pali Text Society. But I don't remember the name of the translator of the new version, but I think one should consult both translations.

_____ : Sorry, what was that?

S: Theri Gatha. T.H.E.R.I. - Theri - meaning an elder bhikkhuni, Gatha - G.A.T.H.A. meaning verses and songs. (Pause)

_____ : "The Sutra of Golden Light".

_____ : "The Survey". "The Enchanted Heart". "The Sutra of Golden Light" "The Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra" I've got a copy of "The Cult of Tara" too. I've also read the book on Dharmapala (laughs) and from that actually I want to look into some of the "Digha Nikaya".

S: Ah. I was beginning to wonder about the Pali Canon, it's been rather neglected so far. (Laughter).

_____ : This text has certainly made me feel I want to do more of the Pali Suttas - but I don't get the chance to reach that much, I don't feel like reading that much after coming back from University.

S: Yes - right -

_____ : I feel I want to get into the Pali texts and "The Survey".

_____ : The Bodhicaryavatara is a favourite, "The Survey", and not so recently, but "The Dhammapada" has inspired me, when on a solitary retreat, and also Zen poems on solitary retreat I often find.

S: Ah.

_____ : (unclear) (So soft voice makes transcribing impossible)... apart from "the Survey" and "The Threefold Lotus Sutra".

S: I think you're the first person who's mentioned the Lotus Sutra.

_____ : "The Songs of Milarepa" and "the Bodhicarya". And a book on acupuncture!
[Laughter]

_____ : Um, what I do get mostly inspired by are autobiographical books such as (unclear) Padmasambhava. Also the Bodhicaryavatara (unclear) .

_____ : (unclear) Dhammapada and "The Survey".

_____ : We've got a lovely translation of the translation of the "Bodhicaryavatara" in Finnish and we used that for translating the puja.

S: Who translated it?

_____ : (unclear) She's at university teaching Buddhism. I doubt whether she's a Buddhist herself. I didn't dare to ask! But on the other hand the translation's inspiring. And I've started reading mostly books like "the Survey" and "the Three Jewels", "Buddhist Thought in India" and the other book by Conze which is about Buddhism. I am trying now to try to find Dutch translations, texts, that I don't know and I'll just ask Order members about titles of texts (unclear) and I just bought the Dhammapada this morning.

S: Not in Dutch?

_____ : No I bought them here in England but we will try to get more texts in Dutch because it feels different to read things in your own language - especially original texts.

_____ : I think the things that mainly kept me going in Cornwall were the *Mitratas* and the Dhammapada, because mainly for most of the time I was on my own and they were quite easy to understand, and I read "The Survey", "The Three Jewels" (unclear) like my bedtime book was the Dhammapada.

_____ : The Bodhicaryavatara and also "The Light of Asia".

S: Ah. Yes.

_____ : The Light of Asia?

S: I'm almost certain that must have been translated in Dutch because it was very popular among the Theosophists and there were lots and lots of Dutch theosophists. So I'm pretty certain you'd find Dutch translation of that - by Sir Edwin Arnold.

_____ : (unclear) The Bodhicaryavatara. (unclear) Mrs Rhys Davids (unclear)

S: I'm trying to get all her works together. I've to collect quite a lot of them, they're all out of print. (unclear) If anyone is ever looking around second hand bookshops and sees any copies of anything by Mrs Rhys Davids buy it, even in you think we've already got it because (unclear) C.A.F Rhys Davids - Mrs. She always puts the "Mrs." (unclear)

_____ : It's not Buddhist but I think I've actually got all of Jung's works.

S: (unclear) [*Laughter*]

_____ : (unclear) "Songs of Milarepa", the "Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava" and another book, a smaller book, on Padmasambhava. (unclear) and "The Survey" and some other books I like just to refer to but I haven't actually read the books very many times, at least I can (unclear) "Bodhicaryavatara".

S: There's Matics' translation. Unfortunately it's out of print. I did find one in a bookshop in India.

_____ :

S: (unclear) buy them up because you'll be needing books anyway for the retreat centre.

_____ : Things like "The Buddhist Bible" and "Buddhist Texts Through the Ages".

(Lots of people talking at once - general chatter about books - texts - etc, very faint)

S: Anyway you seem to know what your favourite reading matter is, but I'm in some ways a little surprised because Songs of Milarepa seem to be a clear favourite. That suggests you're all going to go and plunge yourselves in solitary meditation before long! [*Laughter*]

_____ : One that I've read a lot is the "Thousand Petalled Lotus".

S: An omission which surprised me was the "Sutta Nipata" and the "Udana".

_____ : I think it's a bit difficult to get copies of them actually.

S: They have been in print. The Sutta Nipata might not be in print at the moment. The Udana is in print I think.

_____ : (unclear)

S: I think take as a rule of thumb, that if I've led a study retreat on any text, you ought to know that text. That is a general rule, uh. I've done study on the "Udana", the "Itivuttaka", on Chapters of the Dhammapada, on some songs of Milarepa, on some "Precepts of the Gurus", on "Dhyana for Beginners", "Door of Liberation".

_____ : "Precious Garland" -

S: "Precious Garland", "Bodhicaryavatara", so if I've done a study group on any text, take it that you should get a copy of this text and read it and know it.

S: "Sutta of Hui Neng" -

Vidyasri: I think I find the Sutras and things like that very immediate, I can read them and they have a very immediate - I have an immediate emotional response to them.

S: Or if I've given lectures on the texts, like the "Sutra of Golden Light", like the "White Lotus Sutra", I'm surprised no one mentioned the "Diamond Sutra" because years and years ago I asked the ladies which was their favourite text and they all said, "the Diamond Sutra".

_____ : I've read Hui Neng. I tried to read the "Diamond Sutra" but I found your lecture on it much more inspiring -

S: And of course you should listen to the tapes.

_____ : Do you have a favourite text of your own, Bhante?

S: I would say yes. Let me sort of be systematic. among the Pali texts I really like the "Sutra Nipata" and the "Udana", and among Mahayana Sutras I really like the "Saddharma Pundarika" - the White Lotus Sutra. As regards Tibetan literature - I really like the Songs of Milarepa. I think these would be my overall favourites. I could also add "Bodhicaryavatara".

_____ : What about non-Buddhist?

S: Ah. That's quite a big subject. Do you mean poets or novelists or...? Well the English romantic poets definitely - Shelley, Keats, Coleridge. I like Goethe very much. I also like the Greek dramatists. I like Blake. And also some relatively (unclear) like Middleton Murray's various works and people like George Borrow - "The Bible in Spain". If you want to read a really good book about Spain, read "The Bible in Spain". It's an account of his travels in Spain in the first half of the last century.

_____ : Who was that?

S: George Borrow, he's a Catholic (unclear)

Outside of proper Buddhism I like Sufi literature, especially those cast in poetic form. (Pause). I enjoy Plato very much, especially the (unclear) Dialogues and the Symposium. (Pause) I also like chinese poetry in the English translation. I like the great chinese poets like (unclear) and (unclear). (Laughter).

I remember talking to my friend Mr Chen and trying to sort of speak Chinese words. For instance the chinese equivalent of Shinto which is say shin. I'd say shin, haven't you heard of shin Mr. Chen? And I'd sort of show him the chinese character and he's say oh you mean 'chin' (Laughter). There's a different coda (unclear) quite difficult - I think it's good, even though one has got such a vast literature available, to have a few favourites, a few classics, that you know really well and go back to again and again. Another favourite of mine is 'Paradise Lost' which I've read repeatedly since I was a child. I was absolutely fascinated by it.

_____ : I was wondering Bhante, if you could put out a list of books that are out of print and that it would be worth looking out for.

S: Oh yes. If there's anything by Mrs Rhys Davids, any translation. Whenever I'm down in London I always look in the second-hand department at 'Watkins' and also in 'Dillons'. You sometimes find useful things. But if in doubt, buy it, it's always useful to have any old book on Buddhism to build up a collection. (Pause).

As I said that was a little digression, but maybe not without its uses. It seems more people need to get down to more study. (Pause)

Liz: This text has really made me feel much more connected with the Buddha. Just hearing stories about him, he seems so much more accessible.

S: Well, this is partly why I gave that talk on "A Case of Dysentery". I had the idea of giving a series of talks at one time on different episodes from the life of the Buddha. I never got around to it, but I may do it from time to time and take a particular episode, a particular incident, and dwell on it, and bring out the meaning of it. (Pause).

Anoma: It seems to be, I don't know if its partly because you were just talking to Order members, but it seemed quite a bit different from the talks that you've given before, in a way it's more simple, as if you repeat things a lot than you - yes, it's more immediate. I think.

S: Well, I would imagine if I was addressing only Order members, there would be some difference, and I'd speak a bit differently from what I would if I was addressing a more public audience. (Pause) I think I wouldn't like to address any audience without there being some Order members present. (Pause)

_____: Why?

S: Well it's nice to know that at least some people understand. (Laughter). (Pause)

It was quite nice in India, even though I was having quite big audiences and people really wanted to hear something about the Dharma, it was nice having some Order members who could appreciate more deeply, they could see more in the lecture than actually I expressed. They knew for instance why I said certain points, or why I made certain points, or why I gave a certain emphasis. They could understand that. (Pause). Anyway any further points on the actual text?

Sanghadevi: I found on the last bit - where it says -(unclear)

S: "Saddha", "faith" - yes. (Pause)

Vidyasri: I had a question leading on from that - and it's sort of insight. I've got a dictionary definition of "intuition" here which says "the power of the mind by which it immediately perceives the truth of things without reason or analysis", "a truth so perceived". And I was wondering about the links of connection between "intuition" and "insight", yes.

S: Well, one can say that "insight" is a form of "intuition" - because insight doesn't go through any logical process. All intuition is, one might say not (unclear)

_____: So what's the difference? The degree of truth? The degree to which you've seen through.

S: Well it's difficult to apply a criterion, but in practice it's measurable, so to speak, by the extent to which your character is altered. For instance if you really do see that things are impermanent well it must affect your whole behaviour.

Vidyasri: Right.

S: Just as if you really believe that (unclear) you just want to go and live it (unclear). So if you really do see some improvements so to speak, if it's a matter of intuition amounting to insight your behaviour will be radically modified, radically altered, even transformed. I don't think there can be any theoretical criterion. I think the criterion can be only practical.

Vidyasri: So when one talks about developing your intuition, in a way, it's that faculty of seeing

into the truth of things without using reasoning or analysis.

S: Well, no. You can use reason to help you sort of get there, to help you formulate things, but having formulated them, having arrived, say at the conclusion of well all things are impermanent, you must really see that, so to speak, which means that your emotions are involved - but you see in a certain that your whole character is transformed. Otherwise you could say to anybody "All things are impermanent, aren't they?" They say, "Oh, yes, of course". They wouldn't disagree with you, but there's no insight. They've not really seen. They've not really been gripped by idea that all things are impermanent. So there's no insight. It's really just words to the meaning of which they give assent, because they understand the meaning of those words but there is no insight. (Pause).

_____ : Do you think - a bit further on from there, when the Buddha says, 'in this gathering of five hundred bhikkhus, the lowest bhikkhu is in (unclear)', that they were all stream-entrants when he started talking in this little bit, or I was wondering if some of them kind of rose to the occasion [Laughter]

S: Well it's possible but we're not told so, but we know, from other *Suttas* that that did sometimes happen when the Buddha was speaking, that people were profoundly affected by his words and just developed an actual insight while just listening in a very receptive way.

_____ : I like the way he says at the end (unclear) is a friend of (unclear)

S: Well again this is the response of *Kalyana mitrata* - with the emphasis on the *mitrata*, so to speak. (Pause). According to some commentators the Buddha said that in this gathering of five hundred bhikkhus, Ananda, the lowest bhikkhu is a "*sotappana*", certain of not falling into states of suffering, and sure of enlightenment at the final end. According to some commentators this was said to encourage Ananda, who was himself only a "*sotappana*". (unclear) (Pause).

So having gone through the whole text how do you feel about it? What sort of general impression do you get about the Buddha, about his teaching, ancient India? Have you got any general impressions?

_____ : So many new things. An impression of the Buddha as compassionate and kindly definitely comes out of this and his fondness and relationship with Ananda and vice-versa.

S: As the translator says at the beginning, only the oldest and salient features were reproduced, so one has got quite a strong, as it were, impression of the main features (unclear). It wouldn't be a bad idea to read through a translation of the whole text. You might like to do that some time. It's in the (unclear) translated by Rhys Davids.

_____ : I think partly from having listened to your talk on the Case of Dysentery, it struck me how significant certain issues are - the depth of incidents that hadn't quite struck me before. Something that can look quite simple, some little incident, that one can get involved in, and is significant for us. (Pause)

Sridevi: I think the richness and the variety of the Dharma. All these different lists, different formulations can all be useful. The energy with which he communicates.

_____ : Just His persistence in getting across the points, in the face of real physical weakness.

S: A bit like Milarepa, or Milarepa a bit like the Buddha - they both had that single-mindedness and determination and uncompromisingness. (Pause).

_____ : I think his actual *parinibbana*, I don't know if I can put it into words but somehow I feel I've got more of an understanding of the significance of that, of how the Buddha wasn't just his human form, and how it doesn't mean that he's just sort of gone because his body dies.

S: Have we not had a reading of the whole *Sutta* in connection with *Parinirvana* Day ever? (unclear) maybe long ago.

_____ : Not recently.

S: Perhaps we should do that when (unclear) February comes around. I don't think it would be possible to read the whole text but at least the major part.

_____ : Something that struck me was just the life of the Buddha as being the effect of an actual enlightened person in the world and that came through very strongly. It reminded me of a tape you gave on Padmasambhava Day a few years ago where you talked about the life of the Buddha and the limitations of that and having to go beyond. The Buddha actually couldn't communicate everything -

S: Ah! Right.

_____ : in his lifetime, and the

S: After all He only had forty-five years - Yes. Yes. One shouldn't think that even the Buddha has been able to say it all. He certainly laid down all the main principles, but maybe there are many important applications of the teaching, that the Buddha was not called upon to make due to the circumstances prevailing in his day (Pause)

Sanghadevi: I was thinking a bit more about yesterday when you talked about the Devas, and you said when an enlightened being appears the world (unclear) implications, and also - where it says "celestial eye" we didn't talk about that last time.

S: That pertains to the teaching about the five eyes, so to speak. Eye meaning an organ. There is the eye of flesh which everybody has, there is a so-called "divine eye" which is the eye with which the Buddha perceives devas and so on, and then there's the "dharma eye" the eye of Truth, by which you perceive the Truth. The "dharma eye" opens when you attain "stream-entry", a poetical expression for the attainment of stream entry. Then there's the "*prajna caksu*", which is the eye of wisdom which the arahant possesses, and then there the "*Buddha caksu*" or "*Samanta caksu*" which is of course is possessed only by the Buddha. There are these five "Eyes" representing five successively higher levels of "sight", both literally and metaphorically, of perception, vision.

_____ : What did you say about *prajna*?

S: That is the Arahant. The vision of the Arahant - you might say the ordinary vision, divine vision, dharma vision, wisdom vision and Buddha vision.

_____ : What would be the difference between the Wisdom vision and the Buddha vision?

S: Well here of course there is a view that there is a difference between the Arahant and the Buddha, so it is from the Hinayana - cum - Mahayana point of view. The Buddha's wisdom is more extensive, it penetrates more deeply into "*sunyata*". In the "*Mahavastu*" there's an account of these five eyes, the five visions.

_____ : What struck me that the Devas in the text are quite, well, tearing their hair out because the celestial eye has (unclear) in the world, and I was wondering presuming that other people may be able to see devas.

S: Well, the Buddha is sometimes called "The Eye of the World", "*Loka caksu*" - meaning that to the Buddha, real vision comes with discipline. The Buddha is sometimes called "*Cakku ma*" - that is one of the Buddha's titles - the one possessed of the eye, that is the one possessed of Vision - the "envisioned one".

Sanghadevi: I was wondering if it was in a sense only the Buddha that can see devas because they're so difficult to (unclear)

S: (unclear) sometimes disciples of the Buddha in the Pali texts are shown as teaching devas.

There's another translation of a good part of the Mahaparinibbana Sutta in Woodward's "*Some Sayings of the Buddha*". (Pause)

Sanghadevi: Also in 'The Life of the Buddha' by Nanamoli.

S: Yes. But get the Sutta (unclear) translation of it if you possibly can. It is available. Dialogues of the Buddha, Part (unclear)

Anyway any final point? (Pause)

_____ : I was thinking at the end of ordination ceremonies you say you finish with the last words of the Buddha,

S: Ah - (recites in Pali)

_____ : (unclear)

S: Ah that's the previous line - (Pali Phrase) You can say that too.

_____ : I must I prefer the translation 'With mindfulness strive on' to 'with vigilance try to accomplish'.

S: 'With mindfulness strive on'. 'With mindfulness, strive' is the literal translation. *Appamadena* - with or by mindfulness. *Sampadetha* - the imperative root of the verb - strive thou or strive ye.

_____ : I like the word 'vigilance'.

_____ : Matics translates "Exert yourselves in Wakefulness".

S: Not bad!

Anyway, you've all got your copies of the text? - no doubt the margins are full of little notes. (unclear)

_____ : (unclear) so many basic teachings (unclear) a lot more to (unclear)

S: It is quite a rich text.

All right, let's leave it there.

Voices: Thank you Bhante.

End of Seminar

*Partially transcribed over a number of years by Aniketa,
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