

UDANA "MEGHIYA"

Tape 1 Side 1

Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Silaratna, Prasannasiddhi, Murray Wright, Gunapala, Khemapala.

S: All right then, we come on to the "Meghiya" Chapter of the Udana. I actually have done this chapter twice before, inasmuch as I have done the Udana as a whole twice before. That is to say, I've led study groups on the Udana twice already, on of them actually in New Zealand, but there's no tape of that as far as I remember, because it was on the banks of the river, under a tree, I think it was at Camp Sladra. But as far as I remember, there wasn't any tape-recording equipment, but I do remember feeling that the conditions under which we were studying the Udana there were possibly very similar to those under which the teachings contained in the Udana were originally given in India, because we were studying in the open air, as I've said, on the banks of a river, sitting under a tree, and it was a beautiful day. I don't know whether it was summer or winter there in New Zealand but it was a beautiful day, very sunny and warm and I won't say that people were taking a dip in between sessions of study, but they were certainly taking a dip at other times.

And then also I studied the Udana with a group of people in England, but that was down in Cornwall and I was staying in a chalet on the cliff-side then, some other people were staying in tents, and others were just lodging with friends in the village, and the study itself was actually held in a tent, near the sea shore. But subsequently some of these tapes (and those were the only copies) were stolen - not stolen by someone belonging to the FWBO, determined to lay his hands on the key to enlightenment, but stolen by someone who broke into the flat of an Order Member (who had borrowed the tapes) while she was away and took away her tape-recorder - that didn't matter too much - and took away the tapes too. So we don't have much of a record of Udana study, even though actually I have done quite a bit of study with people on this particular text. So I thought therefore, it wouldn't be a bad idea in any case if we went through the Meghiya Sutta. I don't even know for sure whether the study and discussion of this particular Sutta was on one of the tapes that was stolen; I haven't been able to check up on that. But in any case, doing a chapter like this in the context of [2] studying the whole Udana, one doesn't give it such concentrated attention perhaps and in any case, on those two occasions I didn't have a copy of the Pali text by me for consultation, which today I do have. So we should be able to go into this particular chapter of the Udana perhaps more thoroughly than on those previous occasions; let's see, someone read the first paragraph.

Murray: "Thus have I heard: on a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Calika on Calika Hill. Now on that occasion the Venerable Meghiya was in attendance on the Exalted One. Then the Venerable Meghiya came to the Exalted One and on coming to him saluted him and stood at one side. As he thus stood, he said to the Exalted One, "I desire, sir, to enter Jantu village for alms-quest.

"Do whatever you think it time for, Meghiya." "

S: So, this is the opening of the Sutta. It begins in the usual way with, "Thus I have heard", as you know it's supposedly Ananda who is speaking. "On a certain occasion, the Exalted One

was staying at Calika on Calika Hill." I wonder if we can find out where that was. It might be possible to get some idea of where the Buddha actually was on that occasion. I have a book here. (Pause) The general area seems to be to the west of the Magadvesa, that is to say, westward of the Bihar, United Provinces or Uttar Pradesh area, that is to say, rather towards the Uttar Pradesh rather than towards Bihar, if you see what I mean, perhaps we can't locate it more specifically than that. Anyway, the Buddha was staying there and apparently he was on tour, he was walking from place to place.

We're not told how many people were with him. It would seem, in fact, that there was probably only one person with him, that was the monk that was acting as his attendant at that particular time. So, "on a certain occasion, the Exalted One was staying at Calika on Calika Hill. Now on that occasion the Venerable Meghiya was in attendance on the Exalted One." We usually think of Ananda as the Buddha's attendant. I've talked [about] Ananda in that capacity and what it meant to be the Buddha's attendant in the lecture I gave on "A Case of Dysentery" - you must have heard that. But Ananda wasn't always the Buddha's personal attendant. He came along after the Buddha had, so to speak, experimented with a whole succession of personal [3] attendants and they hadn't always been very satisfactory. But Ananda, as we all know, gave complete satisfaction to the Buddha. The Buddha was very pleased with him and, we may say, he was very pleased with the Buddha! So "at this time" - we're not given any indication to exactly when it was the Venerable Meghiya was in attendance on the Exalted One. The footnote here tells us that Meghiya was of a Sakyan Raja's family; he had the same sort of social and cultural background as the Buddha himself had.

So they were wandering, presumably from place to place, together, "Then the Venerable Meghiya came to the Exalted One and on coming to him saluted him and stood at one side." You notice his behaviour is quite polite, quite correct. "As he thus stood, he said to the Exalted One, "I desire, sir, to enter Jantu village for alms quest." I've already referred to the fact that the Buddha and Meghiya were wandering from place to place on foot and, of course, they took no provisions with them, they took only their begging bowls. So every day they had to go into a village and perhaps beg is not quite the right word: they didn't ask for food, they just stood outside the door holding their alms bowl in their hands and people who wanted to would give them food. So the likelihood is that Meghiya was begging for both of them. The bhikkhu's begging bowl, I don't know if you've seen one, is quite large, quite capacious - actually some Burmese begging bowls I've seen can hold enough food for five or six monks. So I don't know how big they were in the Buddha's day, probably not quite so big as that. Probably the bhikkhu's begging bowl became bigger and bigger as Buddhism progressed and developed, became more prosperous. But anyway, the likelihood is that Meghiya was begging for them both, perhaps to save the Buddha the trouble.

So he comes to the Buddha, salutes him and stands to one side. "As he thus stood, he said to the Exalted One, "I desire, sir, to enter Jantu village for alms quest." This sounds a little stilted in English, it isn't as stilted as that in Pali. And the Buddha says "do whatever you think it is the time for, Meghiya." This is a very common idiom in Pali, used not only by the Buddha, but others: "Do what you think best." It's a polite way of giving your consent, giving your agreement.

So this question of keeping someone informed is very important, really, of quite general applicability. I mean, supposing Meghiya hadn't said anything to the Buddha, well perhaps the

Buddha might have wondered what [4] had happened, where he'd gone, whether he'd had an accident, whether a tiger had eaten him. So to prevent that, this is leaving out of consideration the Buddha's supernormal faculties, to prevent that, he just kept the Buddha informed of what he was intending to do. And also perhaps gave the Buddha the opportunity of saying, "well, don't do it just now, or something of that sort." So this general principle of keeping the other person informed, or other people informed, especially people with whom you have a close relationship, people with whom you're living, people even you're working with, is quite important. I've noticed this in communities; I've noticed it here at Padmaloka. I mean, usually, when I go out, that is to say, unusually, I'm not speaking of my daily walk, if I go off into Norwich, even just for a morning or afternoon, I always let somebody in the community know I've gone off to Norwich, I shall be back in a couple of hours. Otherwise, supposing there's a phone call. Someone answers the phone and it's for me. That person who answers the phone doesn't know that I'm out in Norwich, he goes searching all over the whole building looking for me, not knowing that I'm out. So it's only right and proper under those circumstances to let somebody know what you're doing, where you are, where you're going, where you can be found, where you can be contacted. It's just a part of ordinary courtesy, one might say, consideration for other people. But sometimes community members don't do this. They go off, maybe for half a day, maybe for a day, and you don't know where they are. Phone calls come and messages arrive; you're not quite sure how to handle things because they haven't left word with anybody where they were going, how long they'll be away. So really it's a question one might say of communication, it's a question of keeping in good communication with other people, not wanting to sort of slide off or slink off on your own without anybody knowing what you're up to.

Gunapala: It also comes out of a feeling for the other person.

S: Yes, indeed.

Gunapala: If you feel for the other person, like the other person, there's a consideration.

[5]

S: Yes, you won't want them to be bothered, you won't want them to have to worry, or to give them unnecessary trouble. Also it suggests forethought. It suggests mindfulness. Otherwise, in the community, when there's perhaps a lot of people and a lot of things are happening and there are a lot of phone calls and messages, sometimes a lot of time is wasted looking for people who aren't on the premises; they haven't informed anybody that they'll be away. So one can apply this not only literally, but metaphysically - let other people know what you're up to. Do you see what I mean? Let other people know what's happening.

Gunapala: I know it applies very much on a work-site. If you don't know what the other people are up to it somehow scatters the atmosphere, it's all confused, you're not quite sure what everyone else is doing. It's quite confusing, especially if someone's trying to organize everyone! (Laughter)

S: Well, one could say that the principle applies to the order as a whole, leaving aside other people, because one might say that the order as a whole is a sort of work-site, in a Dharmic sense, and that's why we have the reporting in, when we have Order weekends, so that everybody knows what everybody else is doing, at least to some extent. You can then perhaps work together or take what other people are doing into consideration.

Gunapala: Yes, you know what they're doing and where they are.

S: So here we find Meghiya observing that principle and the Buddha simply saying "Do whatever you think it is the time for, Meghiya." The Buddha has nothing to say, he has no comment on this occasion; it's all right, he's got nothing against Meghiya going off for alms into this village, he has no objection to that.

Prasannasiddhi: What about this thing about Meghiya asking the Buddha for permission, do you think he actually sort of wants this permission?

S: It's not exactly asking for permission. He says "I desire"; I think the Pali is *icchana*, which is "I'd like"; it might be more idiomatic to [6] say "I'd like to go to Jantu village for alms", it's just like that. It's not as if it were asking for permission, that would be perhaps taking it too far. I sometimes tell in this connection, the story of the German Buddhist boy, who used to stay with me in Kalimpong: I had some German Buddhist friends with whom I'm still in contact, who were at that time living in Ahmedabad. They were followers of Lama Govinda, and they had a son, who was also a Buddhist. So when he was about 16 or 17, he was sent to spend a few weeks, I think it was, with me in Kalimpong and I was really very surprised, in a way, by his behaviour, because it was so good, it was far better than the behaviour of anybody else who'd ever stayed with me. He always asked for permission before he did anything; he'd never do anything without coming to me and asking permission. And I came to understand, I think, that this was quite characteristic of Germans - that they were very obedient, very disciplined and not only always did what they were told, but they asked beforehand to be told what to do, or if they could do something. And in his case, I would say, quite positive, but on the other hand it threw some light for me on the rise of Nazism in Germany. Because the whole population, it would seem, or a large part of the population was so submissive to authority, so accustomed to taking orders and not questioning orders. I don't know whether I'm, you know, attaching too much importance to this or not, but it certainly did shed some light for me on that particular situation, the fact that this boy was so abnormally obedient.

So it is not that sort of abnormal obedience which is being inculcated here, because that suggests a certain lack of self reliance, a certain lack of healthy positive independence. So it is not that Meghiya is expected to ask the Buddha about everything and always come to the Buddha and ask for permission; it's a question of communication, letting the Buddha know, and therefore giving the Buddha the opportunity of saying something if he wants to say something. He's not like a servant asking permission of the master; it's a friend keeping a friend informed of what he is doing, and that is a different thing. Actually, people misunderstand if you sort of "expect" that they should keep you informed they take it sometimes to mean that you're expecting that they should ask you for permission, because people do have this hang-up over authority and even when there's no question of authority involved, they will fear [7] that sometimes that that is the case. So sometimes people like to not keep you informed as a way of asserting their independence, but that is a quite false sort of independence, to keep things a bit secret, not let anybody know where you're going or what you're up to. You don't really show your independence or prove your independence or experience your independence in this sort of way.

Murray: You're fundamentally reacting, aren't you?

S: Yes, you're fundamentally reacting. In other words you're reacting to something that isn't

really there, very often.

Gunapala: I think sometimes too, people don't like to be open or say what they're doing, so that people can't come back at them.

S: Yes, because they may feel or suspect that what they are doing is not very skilful, so of course you'll try to shield yourself from possible criticism, if you have an uneasy or uncomfortable feeling that what you're doing is not very skilful.

But in this particular case, I mean, clearly Meghiya had no doubts presumably about what he was going to do; it was something quite ordinary, quite straightforward, quite necessary, and the Buddha had no objection. But even so, even though probably Meghiya knew that there'd be no objection, or at least perhaps he had no reason to suspect that there would be, but nonetheless he informed the Buddha, he let the Buddha know what he was about to do, what he was thinking of doing, what he wanted to do. And the Buddha left him to his own devices.

Prasannasiddhi: It seems to imply that if you're living with people you keep closely informed with them, you know, you actually be with them rather than sort of not be with them. It sort of seems to imply sharing on a basic, human kind of level, just keeping people informed.

S: I've just recollected an incident; this is a bit, sort of, not exactly a diversion, but it perhaps throws some light on this sort of area. I remember when I was in Poona on my last visit, the question of Dhammarakshita accompanying me arose and he, of course, has a job - he works in some sort of musical therapy set-up. It's mainly just Dhammarakshita just getting together with people and having apparently very positive and healthy effects on them, indeed, in the name of some sort of therapy or other! (Laughter) Really what does the trick is not what is supposed to actually be provided, [8] but their contact with him. But anyway, he seems to come and go as he pleases and, in fact, he's rather proud in a way over the fact that nobody ever knows whether he's there or not; that is to say none of the authorities and officials in the hospital, they never know where he is because he's got freedom to roam around and do a bit of therapy here and a bit of therapy there. So he's very much his own master. So this means that he isn't really under their control, because they don't know what he's doing. So this of course is very much to the advantage of the FWBO, perhaps one could say that in a sense it was quite skilful, but it does show that if you want to sort of do things on your own or off your own bat, as it were, whether for a skilful or an unskilful reason, you know, one of the things that you have to do to some extent is to keep other people in the dark. Do you see what I mean? Usually, of course, people do this for unskilful reasons, and it's that sort of (word) that we were talking about earlier on. But anyway, sometimes, very occasionally perhaps, as in his case, it can be worked relatively skilfully. This is what you have to do with Mara, you might say. You shouldn't let Mara know what you're up to! Sometimes you can't let the world know what you're up to, because they will take undue advantage of you. But that certainly doesn't apply within the spiritual community. It certainly doesn't apply where your friends are concerned. It certainly doesn't apply within your community or work situation. There must be complete openness and full mutual communication All right let's carry on then.

"So the Venerable Meghiya robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Jantu Village in quest of alms food. And after questing for alms food there, returned after his rounds and after eating his meal, went towards the bank of the river Kimikala and on reaching it, while taking exercise by walking up and down and to and fro, he saw a lovely delightful

mango grove. At the sight of it he thought: "Truly lovely and delightful is this mango grove! A proper place surely is this for a clansman for striving for concentration. If the Exalted One would give me leave, I would come here to this mango grove to strive for concentration."

S: So we see what happens: "The Venerable Meghiya, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Jantu Village in quest of alms food". This is the customary procedure which is described in the Suttas, hundreds if not thousands of times. "And after questing for alms food ... " that is to say by going from door to door and standing outside each door [9] with his bowl, " ... returned after his rounds. And after eating his meal, went towards the bank of the river Kimikala, and on reaching it, while taking exercise by walking up and down and to and fro ..." This was a quite common practice that the bhikkhus walked up and down and this is called CANKAMA, it helps with digestion. It's not just walking, it's walking up and down, usually quite thoughtfully, mindfully, reflectively. So while walking up and down and to and fro, "... he saw a lovely delightful mango grove. " I don't know if you've ever seen a mango grove; they're quite a feature of the landscape in this part of India. It is a tree of only medium height. It is, of course, the tree that produces the famous fruit called the mango. Its branches spread quite widely in proportion to its height and it has an abundance of dark green glossy leaves. The mango tree therefore provides a very good shade and mango trees are usually planted in groves, near villages, as much for their shade as for their fruit. In that part of India outside every village of any size you'll see two or three mango groves, which provide a very dense and a very cool shade, which is very agreeable in the summertime. But I think I've mentioned in my 'Thousand Petalled Lotus' how I ate a meal in this sort of way after going for alms to a village, and how I retired with my friend to the shade of a mango grove and how we sat down there and ate, so I know this very well. The scene at that time was much the same as it might have been in the Buddha's own day. We still have these truly lovely and delightful mango groves. So you can understand this, that Meghiya had walked into the village. He'd gone from door to door. He'd walked back and it was probably the middle of the day by that time, it must have been very hot. So the mango grove must have been lovely and delightful, just as the text says.

So, "At the sight of it he thought truly lovely and delightful is this mango grove, a proper place surely is this for a clansman, a KULAPUTRA, striving for concentration." 'For concentration' is in brackets here in the translation because the text simply says () 'for effort' for spiritual effort, not necessarily a meditative effort, or perhaps a meditative effort only in the broader sense. I mean, not necessarily a meditative effort in the sense of trying to develop the dhyanas, though that would be very common; insight could also be developed. One could be reflecting in various ways. So when Meghiya sees this mango grove, he not only thinks it is a truly lovely and delightful place, he thinks also that it is a proper place in which to make an effort, to make a spiritual effort, perhaps even to meditate. Does this convey anything to one? Is there any sort of significance in this?

[10]

Murray: One thing that makes me wonder is you mentioned before that the Buddha had a series of attendants and here you have an instance of, I assume he's a young bhikkhu, a sramanera, living with the Buddha; but what is implied here is that he feels he needs to go away and develop concentration; which makes me wonder because from other sources it would appear the Buddha had a very powerful personality spiritually, and one would think that he would be better off sticking around the Buddha, as it were.

S: Well, this is the very point that actually does arise, in some ways it is the point of the whole sutta. I mean, in some ways, yes, Meghiya's aspiration is a very worthy one, but the question arises, well was that the best thing for Meghiya to do at that time? As we'll see later on, it probably wasn't, in fact it definitely wasn't. But let's linger a bit. I was thinking of some other significance to this particular sentence: "A proper place surely is this for a clansman striving for concentration." I mean, here was this beautiful mango grove, very cool and very pleasant, so Meghiya when he saw it thought it would be a good place for making a spiritual effort. Do you think everybody who saw the mango grove would have thought in that way necessarily?

Gunapala: No.

S: No. Someone might have thought it would have been a good place to have a sleep! Somebody else might have thought it a really good place to meet your girlfriend; but Meghiya thought a really good place to meditate. So this little passage suggests that you see things very much in terms of your own needs, huh? The use that you think of making a certain place is very much related to your own needs or where you feel you are. You know, supposing we are travelling round the country and we see a beautiful old mansion on a hill, surrounded by woods. What do we think? "Oh what a lovely retreat centre that would make!" Somebody else passing by might think, "Oh that would make a really fine hotel", or "You could have a beautiful casino there"; you see what I mean?

Murray: I was talking actually to one of the locals who thought that Padmaloka would be a good place to turn into a private hotel.

S: Yes, it probably would be, or a golf club. So, he thought, "Truly lovely [11] and delightful is this mango grove. A proper place surely is this for a clansman for striving." And then he goes on to think, "If the Exalted One would give me leave, I would come here to this mango grove to strive for concentration." He's still up to this point going about it in the proper way; his attitude is quite correct. He thinks that if the Exalted One would give me leave, he's not thinking of doing anything without the Buddha's permission. But clearly, the implication is that he thinks it would be better for him to be sitting there in the mango grove and meditating than just being with the Buddha.

Prasannasiddhi: In New Zealand people are always talking about they know a really good spot for a solitary retreat. They're always sort of going around and there are all these places dotted up and down the country that would be good for solitary retreats.

S: Practically the whole of New Zealand apparently!

Gunapala: New Zealand is a lovely and delightful place like a huge mango grove! (Laughter)

Khemapala: Bhante, going back to when he was walking up and down the river bank, that's sort of quite a common practice, sort of ...

S: Yes, not necessarily walking up and down the river bank, but anywhere. It is a common practice, yes.

Khemapala: I wondered about that, is it possible to maybe get into the first dhyana doing

walking meditation?

(Side Two)

S: I think it's quite difficult to get into a dhyanic state if you're actually moving about. I would not say it's impossible, because in the first dhyana mental activity is still present. I did have a letter not so long ago from an order member who'd been on solitary retreat the whole month and he said that he was, he believes, in a dhyanic state for practically the whole of that time, even when he was just sort of walking about, and from the description he gives of his experience on that solitary retreat, it seems to me that that could well have been the case. Because as I said, in the first dhyana mental activity is still present. I think once mental activity ceases, [12] as it does as you enter the second dhyana, I think it is very difficult then to maintain any physical activity. They you're almost obliged to sit down, to lie down or to recline in some way or other. It's as though you want to put the body aside and not have to think about it, so that you can go deeper into concentration.

Gunapala: It does seem quite a good time to reflect, just think about things.

S: It is said, for instance, that Aristotle was in the habit of walking up and down. It seems as though he thought best when he was walking up and down. Apparently, he lectured when walking up and down. So this is why he has the sort of title of Peripatetic. Peripatetic means walking up and down, simply. And his philosophy is sometimes called the Peripatetic philosophy. Peripatetic Philosophy means the philosophy of Aristotle, the walker up and down.

Khemapala: It's quite certain, I think it's easier to, say, think.

S: It's certainly a quite common practice. It's still well known in Theravada countries. In some of the Buddhist holy places, they have a whole row of carved stone lotuses, which are supposed to mark the spot where the Buddha walked up and down. They have one of these I believe at Buddha Gaya.

Gunapala: It sounds quite civilized to me, just walking up and down. I've seen gardens with terraces, sort of rows of things that go over the top of the walkway, a walkway round the edge of a garden, which is just for this thing, sort of walking back and forwards.

S: Well, in Europe, especially in the Middle Ages, every monastery had a cloister. There's a cloister, you know, at Il Convento. Not so much for walking up and down, but walking round and round. But the principle is the same. Norwich Cathedral, which originally was the church of a monastery, has a large and quite famous cloister still intact. So the monks could walk round. I suppose, in warmer countries like Italy, the cloister gave one protection from the extreme heat, so that one could walk up and down in the shade in the middle of the day. And in countries like England, of course, the cloister gave you protection from the rain and you could still get your daily exercise walk up and down and round and round inside a cloister, even when the weather didn't permit you to take exercise outside.

Silaratna: That incident with Sona seems to point to the fact that it was a [13] popular practice.

S: Yes, he was of course overdoing it: he walked up and down to such an extent that his feet started bleeding, huh?

Khemapala: It's not known as a practice in the FWBO, it, people don't do it as a practice? Is it ...

S: People might spontaneously do it; in the summertime, I quite often used to walk up and down that park or that drive, rather than go out for a walk. I mean, perhaps not many people have time to walk up and down, not if you're working on a building site - you don't particularly want to walk up and down in your spare time. But if you lead a sedentary life, as many of the bhikkhus did, then walking up and down as a form of exercise is very useful, and it does say here that Meghiya was taking exercise by walking up and down and to and fro. There is another passage which I recently came across, which I was trying to remember, where the Buddha seems, I think, to actually recommend exercise in the form of walking up and down, to keep the bhikkhus healthy.

Murray: One thing I've found in the past, particularly when I lived in the mountains in New Zealand: I used to do a bit of walking meditation as a practice and it was very useful actually absorbing Dharma or what I'd read, say, if I'd been reading the Survey or a Sutta or something, to read for an hour or two hours and go and walk up and down for a while.

S: Yes, one can reflect very easily and very naturally when walking up and down in that way, especially if one is walking up and down in a fairly leisurely sort of fashion, without making it too much of a race, too much of a sprint. Just walking up and down, and maybe one's breath adjusts quite naturally to that rhythm, so you are in a quite harmonious, quite peaceful sort of state. And you can think calmly and quietly.

Prasannasiddhi: It brings to mind also the FWBO habit of going for walks, taking people for walks: a variation on a theme.

S: Yes, walking in the park, walking down to the river. (pause) All right then, [14] so he concludes by thinking, "If the exalted one would give me leave, I would come here to the mango grove to strive for concentration." All right let's carry on.

"so the Venerable Meghiya went to the Exalted One ..." (interruption) The row of dots means the previous passage is repeated in full.

" ... and sat down at one side. And as he sat thus, he told the Exalted One of his find and what he had thought, and said, "If the Exalted One gives me leave, I would go to that mango grove to strive for concentration."

S: So here he is actually asking for permission, not just saying what he would like to do. He is quite explicitly asking the Buddha to give him permission. So what does the Buddha say?

"At these words, the Exalted One said to the Venerable Meghiya, I am alone until some other monk arrives."

S: So, you notice two things about the Buddha's reply: well the first part of it, the first sentence; first of all he doesn't agree to Meghiya's proposal, he doesn't give permission as

requested. But he doesn't refuse it altogether, he doesn't say absolutely NO you can't do that; he asks him to wait a little. So the Buddha is so to speak being very reasonable, as we would expect the Buddha to be, of course. He doesn't just say 'no', he simply says, well wait a little, be patient. He's merely asking Meghiya not to go to the mango grove just now.

But then, the second sentence comes with something one might think at first rather extraordinary. He says, 'I'm alone until some other monk arrives'. So one thinks, well, that's a strange sort of reason to give. The Buddha says 'I'm alone until some other monk arrives'. Well, why should the Buddha not be alone, one might think. Does he need somebody with him, is he dependent on company? Does he want someone to talk to? So why is this? Is he actually dependent on somebody else for practical help? It doesn't seem that he has become elderly or infirm at this stage. We know in any case that at the end of his life, on the last day of his life, he was walking from place to place; he seems to have been quite healthy, quite capable, huh? He wasn't a Valetudinarian, he wasn't an invalid. So why does he say this: "I am alone until some other monk arrives"? This goes back a bit, you know, to what I was talking about in that lecture on "A case of dysentery", in connection with the Buddha and Ananda. Let's go into this, although from a somewhat different point of view. Why should [15] the Buddha not be alone? One might say that one would expect a Buddha to be alone, to be happy to be alone. Sometimes, of course, the Buddha wanted to be alone, there is that very well known incident where he became tired, in fact, the text says he became annoyed with having so many people around him, so many people to deal with, to talk to, that without saying anything to anyone, and that's quite significant in the circumstances, he went off into the jungle. He didn't want anyone to know where he was because he didn't want anybody to be able to get at him, to come and ask him any questions. He stayed there with an elephant and a monkey who couldn't ask any questions! (Laughter) He was quite happy in their company it seems. But, you know, that was quite exceptional and it is represented as something quite exceptional. But here the Buddha says "I am alone until some other monk arrives." What is the significance of that? It seems really quite extraordinary on the face of it.

Murray: Possibly is it to do with the fact that the Buddha was so popular, he needed someone to be with him to act on his behalf, as a secretary, in modern terms, someone to take calls.

S: Well, there is that possibility of course, he doesn't actually give that reason, but, there is that possibility yes. People often came to see the Buddha; sometimes they needed to be introduced or given a time, or to be told what was the proper time, there is that possibility. But on the other hand, we know that earlier in his career, the Buddha wandered about on his own. There's no suggestion from the description of the background, so to speak, but there were a lot of people around, after all, they weren't living in or near a city, on this particular occasion they were staying at Calika on Calika Hill.

Khemapala: I wondered if he wasn't trying to maybe delay Meghiya from going off. He felt that it would do him a lot more good being with him rather than going off alone.

S: Yes, one could say that in that case it would have been a skilful means, you know, seeing that perhaps it wouldn't be good for Meghiya to go off in that way, and, you know, trying to induce him not to do so by appealing, as it were, to his sense of duty and responsibility, that he shouldn't leave [16] the Buddha alone, and that the Buddha would be left alone if Meghiya went off, because there was no other monk around able to be with the Buddha. It could've been a skilful means, that is quite possible.

Silaratna: He might have been pointing to the fact that Meghiya was supposed to be in attendance on the Buddha at that time, that the actual priority in Meghiya's position was that he should have been attending on the Buddha.

S: Indeed. At least wait until some other monk turned up to take over from him, at least that. Again, this introduces another important principle: don't give up your responsibilities until you can hand them over to somebody else. We all know about that one, don't we? Or, I mean, I hope we do!

That reminds me of something that Buddhadasa used to say, since Buddhadasa has been mentioned a little earlier on. When he went down to Brighton, I think almost before he'd started really getting the centre together, he said his first aim would be to work to make himself redundant. In other words, when you take on any responsibility, you should foresee the fact that, yes, sooner or later you're going to want to give up that responsibility. Therefore, it is your duty to train up someone to whom you can hand over that responsibility, in other words, make yourself redundant, but not simply by throwing up the responsibility, but by handing it over to someone who you have prepared for that purpose. That is the sort of far-sighted responsible attitude.

Gunapala: You know that before you even start some responsibilities, you just have to train somebody up.

S: Yes, Yes, maybe you don't see anybody on the horizon as yet, but you have to bear that in mind. Otherwise you have to be ready to carry on the responsibility indefinitely. So a sensible person thinks ahead and thinks from the beginning in fact of training up someone to take over from him.

Gunapala: This guy is starting to seem a bit selfish to me, he doesn't consider the Buddha very much: what he would like to do, what would be good for him; he seems quite selfish.

S: Well, he was clearly concerned with his own development! (Laughter) You heard perhaps what I had to say about that in my last lecture. There can be [17] an over-emphasis, or the wrong sort of emphasis on what is good for one's own development. As we'll probably see, that was in essence Meghiya's argument later on. Anyway, the Buddha says, wait a little, Meghiya, "I am alone until some other monk arrives." Any other possible significance in this?

Silaratna: Would the area have been - for the Buddha it wouldn't have been so much a problem - a dangerous place with animals and ...

S: That's possible, that's possible.

Silaratna: More for Meghiya's protection than the Buddha's.

S: Well, there's always that possibility, certainly in ancient India, there were tigers roaming around and other wild animals.

Gunapala: It would be Meghiya who needed the protection in that case, not the Buddha!

S: Yes, yes.

Prasannasiddhi: It could also suggest perhaps that because the Buddha knows a lot, after all he is enlightened, and he's on his own and he seems to be open to communication and Meghiya's not kind of ...

S: Well, supposing the Buddha wanted to say something, because the texts often represent the Buddha just calling the monks together, he didn't always wait to be asked a question, very often, it seems, he'd be thinking things over, turning things over in his own mind, and then he'd call the monks together and tell them what he'd been thinking, or he'd tell Ananda what he'd been thinking. So it's as though there should be someone there, waiting to receive anything that drops from the Buddha's lips. What a pity, here you've got an enlightened human being and you just leave him on his own with no one to share his enlightenment with. No one to pass on to any sort of thought or reflection that he had. After all, there was no writing in those days, not for religious purposes, it wasn't as though the Buddha had a notebook with him or a diary that he could jot it all down in. No, he was dependent on having someone there with him to hear what he had to say and to remember [18] it and to pass it on. So in a way, if you left the Buddha on his own, you left the Buddha without a medium of communication to humanity. On that occasion, or to that extent some teaching might be missed, might be lost, do you see what I mean? One must think perhaps in those terms too, I mean, it's in your power, weak and miserable mortal that you are, to deprive even a Buddha of the capacity, or at least the opportunity for communication, you can cut him off. So that's quite a thought, isn't it? I mean the Buddha, while he was staying alone, might have had a train of reflection, a train of thought of profound importance and significance, but if he wasn't able to give expression to that to some other human being, leaving aside the question of the devas, who presumably are always around, that would all be lost. So perhaps there's that also to be considered.

Murray: Why do you presume that the Devas would always be around?

S: Well, one gathers that from the Pali Cannon. There always were devas around, thousands and millions, even more devas than human beings, and the Buddha is supposedly the teacher of gods and men. So devas are always sort of hovering around. But, I mean, maybe that isn't a point of view that the modern mind finds easy to accept. Devas will treasure up, perhaps, a teaching that human beings weren't able to receive. But speaking in ordinary human terms, if the Buddha wasn't able to give expression to a teaching, because there's nobody around to listen to it, then it would be lost, unless, of course, the Buddha bore it in mind and repeated in on some future occasion. But perhaps it's best, even in the case of the Buddha to get it fresh, you know, just when it occurs to the Buddha and he does seem to have been on certain occasions even eager to communicate whatever he'd thought, whatever he'd realized, on the spot. He used to call the bhikkhus together and address them.

Gunapala: It does seem this is almost a responsibility of an attendant, this aspect is the responsibility of Ananda and of this attendant, Meghiya.

S: Yes. So he's not just an attendant, as I think I've pointed out in that lecture on "A case of dysentery", in the sense of someone who washes the Buddha's robe and goes and gets him a drink of water, or receives his visitors; he's someone who is there, even more importantly perhaps, if the Buddha wants to say something, if the Buddha has something to communicate, at least there's that one person there, waiting, as it were, to receive it, so that it isn't lost.

[19]

Murray: This seems to imply that a Buddha has a sort of healthy sense of his own importance.

S: Yes, Yes. It would seem from the Pali Canon that the Buddha had no false modesty whatsoever. He was well aware of, in our ordinary human terms, his own importance. There was not only no false modesty, there was no humility in the case of the Buddha. I have sometimes said that humility, of course in the Christian sense, is not a Buddhist virtue. I mean, how can you even have self respect unless you have a proper, objective, positive sense of your own importance? I mean, in modern times, it does seem, well, I say modern times, in our particular corner of Western civilization, it would seem that very often people don't appreciate themselves enough, don't have a sufficient awareness of their own worth as human beings, as the psychologists say, quite a negative self image. One finds this very often with people, I don't know how characteristic it is, one certainly finds it in people within the orbit of the Friends, that in many cases, they don't think much of themselves. So if you don't think much of yourself, you probably can't make much of yourself. So you need to have a sort of healthy sense of your own importance. And of course, a Buddha has that, perhaps in a quite different sort of way. A Buddha knows that he is a Buddha. I mean, you should know that you're at least a human being. If you have any doubts about that, there isn't really much hope for you, not for the time being. A lot of people do feel or did feel very, very unworthy. That's one of the reasons why people find it difficult to accept presents, they feel they don't deserve it, they're not worthy: "Oh, is this for me? It can't possible be for me! I don't deserve this, I'm not worthy". They feel quite uncomfortable that anybody should think them worthy of a present or a gift.

Prasannasiddhi: Sounds horrible! I'm not worthy implies a denial of your sort of existence

S: Yes.

Prasannasiddhi: Not worthy of what?

S: Well, some people almost feel that they're not worthy to exist, they don't deserve to live. I remember somebody telling me that he felt, (it might have been a he, it might have been a she, I'm not sure) that they should've been stifled at birth, they just weren't worthy to live.

[20]

Prasannasiddhi: Would that be a sort of Christian sort of conditioning in terms of sin, and things like that?

S: Well, I suppose it's easy to blame everything on to Christianity; no doubt Christianity has quite a lot to do with it. But it doesn't really dispose of the matter to say 'Well, it's all the fault of Christianity; it's just my Christian upbringing etc., etc.'" Perhaps that's too broad and too general.

Murray: It seems to relate to positive emotion, you know, ones own inability to appreciate the fact that to the extent that you've developed positive emotion

S: (interrupting) If one thinks of it in terms of importance, well, leaving aside Christianity, one can quite easily feel lacking in importance by the mere fact that one lives under the conditions of modern civilization, where you have so little power, so little control over your

own life, your own destiny, so little say in things, hum? That might make you feel powerless and therefore unimportant, quite apart from the question of Christianity.

Murray: Do you think that is peculiar to Western Civilization?

S: I don't think it is. I think to some extent in a way, in certain cases or in certain systems it's a general condition of organized humanity. I mean, what about the slaves who built the pyramids? I mean, there may have been a difference in that case because after all they were building the pyramids at the command of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was god, god on earth, so perhaps, (one can only speculate) they got a deep sense of satisfaction that they were labouring for god, they were doing, as it were, their religious duty, in that sense fulfilling themselves. I doubt a Greek would have felt like that, not a free-born Greek anyway.

Prasannasiddhi: The free-born Greeks had their own slaves.

S: They were all little pharaohs, huh? But, yes, under the conditions of organized, even highly organized social life, excessively centralized social life, your power and authority are concentrated at the apex of the pyramid; the ordinary citizen, the ordinary member of the community can feel powerless [21] and therefore unimportant and therefore lacking in worth and I think that is the position in many modern states. You can feel this very likely in, say a communist country where you've been brought up quite free from any indoctrination of Christianity.

Prasannasiddhi: I think with regard to Christianity, I was thinking there's a Christian attitude that your bliss, your happiness will come after your life has ceased; while you're here on earth it's just a matter of just doing good or not doing good.

S: Yes, it's a state of probation, as it were, it's just a preparation... There's some truth in that, but in the case of Christianity, it's quite distorted. Of course your actions now will affect your fate, let us say for want of a better term, later on. But when it takes the form of "Oh you must deny yourself now so you can gain later on; lay up treasure in heaven; the less you have now the more you'll have then; the more miserable you are now, the happier you'll be then;" that just isn't the right way from a Buddhist point of view. Buddhism sees no reason why happiness shouldn't begin here on earth, begin, of course, in the mind especially, of course, in meditation.

Murray: That's the difference, isn't it? It's life, in Christianity at base as a human being you're a miserable wretch, whereas in Buddhism you're an enlightened being.

S: Well, I think a Christian would find fault with that formulation because he might come back and say, "Well according to Buddhism, a human being is effectively greed, hatred and delusion." It's the Mahayana that would say that "Well yes, you're basically a Buddha" and all that, but nonetheless, even the Mahayana, you know, would say your present condition is one of being overpowered by greed, hatred and delusion. But nonetheless greed, hatred and delusion are unskilful mental states, which, according to Buddhism you can remove by your own human efforts, under proper guidance and with the right sort of spiritual friendship. But in the case of Christianity you are a sinner, a sin has somehow mysteriously been transmitted to you on account of your descent from Adam (laughter) and that sin can be removed as it were on your behalf only by the second Adam, that is to say Christ, provided you believe in

him. Because he has taken upon himself the satisfaction [22] for your sins, he has atoned for your sins. If you accept that, i.e. his sacrificial death on your behalf, then you are saved, you are made free from sin. Well this is very different from the Buddhist point of view, from a Buddhist attitude.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose it was also a Christian attitude that everyone is a part of God, they have ...

S: Well, that isn't strictly speaking a Christian attitude. The Christian attitude would be that every soul, you know, was created by God and that he intended that every individual soul should be perfect, in a sense, each individual should be created perfect but the sin of Adam, the disobedience of Adam has spoiled it all. I think modern Christians don't accept literally the story of Adam, the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden eating the apple, but nonetheless, they have to accept that some sort of fall has taken place and that man is in some sense sinful, in some sense in need of redemption and they believe that that redemption is somehow associated with or bound up with the life and death, and subsequent resurrection of Christ. They haven't really worked out fully the implications of their rejection of the literal truth of the Genesis story. If they do, they come perhaps quite close to the Buddhist position, but they don't really want to do that because then Christ becomes a human teacher, admittedly a very good man and perhaps an enlightened teacher with a small 'e', but still a human teacher and that alters the whole nature of Christianity. Anyway, that's going a long way from Meghiya, a long way from the Buddha saying "I'm alone till some other monk arrives".

Anyway, let's go on then. How about the next paragraph, and the next.

"Then a second time the Venerable Meghiya said to the Exalted One, 'Sir, the Exalted One has nothing further to be done, there's nothing more to add to what he has done, there is more to be added to what I have done. If the Exalted One gives me leave, I would go to that Mango Grove to strive for concentration.' Then a second time the Exalted One replied "Wait a little Meghiya, I am alone until some other monk arrives."

So what do you think of Meghiya's argument here? He says "The Exalted One has nothing further to be done, has nothing more to add to what he has done, but for me sir, there is more yet to be done, there is more to be added to what I have done." Meghiya is saying here, "It's all right for you, you're [23] Enlightened, you don't have to bother about meditation, you don't have to bother about striving; I'm not yet Enlightened, I have to think in these sorts of terms." So this is of course true in a sense, but do you think in a way it's an honest argument on Meghiya's part? He's almost, or at least he's getting perilously near to accusing the Buddha of selfishness, do you see what I mean? It sounds a bit like "You're all right, you're not bothering about me; you've gained Enlightenment, well what about my Enlightenment?"

Gunapala: Yes, "You're stopping me from getting enlightened!"

S: Yes, yes, "You're stopping me from getting enlightened, you're not concerned about my personal development". In other words, it suggests a sort of lack of faith in the Buddha, lack of trust. It's as though he's thinking that the Buddha has forgotten that. It's as though he is thinking that in not being willing to allow Meghiya to go off and meditate, the Buddha is not thinking about Meghiya's personal development, do you see what I mean? It's as though Meghiya feels the Buddha needs to be reminded about that. It doesn't occur to him that the

Buddha may be unwilling to give his permission, so to speak, because that would not be good for Meghiya, it need not be good for Meghiya to go off and meditate on his own. That possibility doesn't seem to occur to him. In other words he seems to be convinced that what he wants to do is right and what he wants to do is right because that's how he's going to get Enlightenment. It's as though he knows and the Buddha doesn't know. In other words, he doesn't seem to think that the Buddha has taken his needs into consideration at all. He appears to be indirectly accusing the Buddha of doing just that, i.e. not taking his, Meghiya's, needs into consideration.

Murray: It's almost the classical so-called Arhant view.

S: Yes, I mean, it means he could not have appreciated what it meant to gain Enlightenment, if he thought it could exclude concern for others. So that suggests that he's not, as we would say, very much in contact with the Buddha, not in real communication with the Buddha, doesn't seem to understand the Buddha, as far as we can see. He seems to think that the Buddha is devoid of sympathy or devoid of compassion, that the Buddha isn't concerned for his, that is to say Meghiya's needs; or is perhaps not even aware of them. [24] So it is a powerful argument, in a way, on the surface of it; that the Buddha has nothing further to do, whereas Meghiya has and so he thought that the Buddha has prevented him from doing what he still needs to do: sitting in that mango-grove and meditating.

Murray: It would suggest that Meghiya's confused because on one hand he is saying, "Well you've nothing left to do, you're Enlightened"; but on the other hand he's saying, "You're trying to block me".

S: Yes, yes indeed. In other words, he has an inadequate conception of Enlightenment, he doesn't seem to understand that Enlightenment includes compassion and concern, therefore, for others.

Silaratna: He seems to have a rather possessive attitude too, because he says "there's more to be done, there's more to be added to what I have done", he sort of ...

S: Yes, well maybe; that is the Pali idiom, perhaps we shouldn't place too much stress on it because it is an idiom commonly used: "I've further to go".

Prasannasiddhi: It shows you the sort of power of one's sort of reasoning or false reasoning, I suppose of rationalization, that it can almost seem that he's got a point, you know, the Buddha may, sort of, be disregarding him, but that's not the case.

S: Well, on the surface of it, it appears not only logical, but quite reasonable, but only on the assumption of a particular conception or the rightness of a particular conception of Buddhahood itself.

Gunapala: He must have the view that Buddhahood is definitely set at a goal, a set point, once you've reached it, well you've got nothing else to achieve, no further to go, so he's got this fixed view of enlightenment.

S: But even if one takes that as true, provisionally true, that is to say that Buddhahood represents a fixed point, or the attainment of a fixed point, he still overlooks the fact that

Buddhahood involves what we call compassion and that therefore the Buddha, if he is a Buddha cannot be indifferent to Meghiya's needs, he must be concerned; but Meghiya appears to [25] think that he isn't, and needs to be reminded of them, even as though he's forgotten that Meghiya hasn't yet gained enlightenment and needs to devote time to that. Clearly he doesn't think that the time he is spending with the Buddha is helping him on the path to Enlightenment; we're coming to that point shortly.

Murray: In a way, this stresses spiritual community, the need for it.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think that there's any significance in the fact that he wants to go off to meditate, do you think he's got an idea of the spiritual life in terms of meditation?

S: It could be that. I mean, no doubt meditation occupies a very important place in the spiritual life, one might even say that it occupies a central place. But perhaps Meghiya has got too fixed an idea about meditation. I mean, meditation means being in a certain mental state, it doesn't necessarily mean going and sitting in a mango-grove, it means being in a certain mental state and perhaps he hasn't sufficiently considered the possibility that he may be more likely to be experiencing something like that mental state in the Buddha's company, than on his own supposedly meditating.

Well, that we shall see later on.

[26]

TAPE TWO

S: (cont.) ... the mango-grove was a suitable place for meditation, so from that he argued that he ought to make use of it for that purpose, immediately. Do you see what I mean? So the fact that something is suited to a certain purpose does not mean that you should take advantage of that necessarily at once; sometimes we tend to think that way, hum?

Gunapala: Does this come back to a self-centred view, or... What does that stem from?

S: Well no, not quite a self-centred view, but I mean not considering the question of suitability, not considering whether it's the right time, whether that is what you really ... It's as though you're so concerned that a facility should be used, you don't consider sufficiently whether it's the right time for you to make use of that facility; it's in a way a sort of greed. It's as though you come into this library and think, 'Ooh, all these books not being read, what a waste!' So you sit down regardless of your particular needs, you think you must make use of them. I mean, you can do that with people. I mean, I find that sometimes with people, they think that since they've got me for five minutes they must ask me as many questions as possible, they ask so many questions that I don't have time to give a reply to any of them!

So it's as though in your eagerness to make use of an opportunity you don't consider whether you are the person who needs to make use of that opportunity. I mean, Meghiya jumps to that sort of conclusion: "Truly lovely and delightful is this mango-grove. A proper place surely is this for a clansman for striving (for concentration)." If the Exalted One would give me leave I would come here to this mango-grove". He hasn't considered whether he's the suitable person in this case. Yes, agreed, it's a fine mango-grove, a beautiful place for meditation, but is that what you need to do at that moment? He hasn't considered that; he's assumed that since that

mango-grove is a suitable place for meditation, therefore he should at once go and meditate there, without enquiring whether that is in fact what he at this particular moment, in view of all the circumstances, really should do.

So it's a question of asking oneself, well, what do you need to do now? All right, the facilities are available but is this the time you need to make use of them? So it's a sort of greed, as I said that you don't want good facilities to be wasted - they're facilities for you, and if you try to make use of them simply because they're there, regardless of whether they're useful to you at this moment, well really you've misunderstood their purpose.

Prasannasiddhi: It's sort of placing yourself in an external situation and just being kind of distracted by the external sort of conditions.

S: Yes, yes. I mean, he was distracted in a way, from the opportunity he had by another opportunity, which might have been suitable for him at some other time but which wasn't then. He overlooked the fact that he had an opportunity, you know, in being with the Buddha, and he was a bit obsessed by the idea of this opportunity to meditate, just because the mango-grove was there. I mean, he hadn't thought about apparently meditating in that way before, it was only the sight of the mango-grove gave him the idea. Until then, apparently, he was quite happy staying with the Buddha. But it's as though he was thinking maybe I'd do better meditating in the mango-grove than I would just staying with the Buddha, and looking after him.

Prasannasiddhi: I don't t even think he thought that ...

[27]

S: Perhaps he didn't even think that, the text doesn't actually say so.

Prasannasiddhi: He's got so sort of attracted by the mango-grove he's sort of forgot about everything else. (laughter)

S: Yes.

Murray: So in a sense he could be rationalizing intoxication with sense impressions.

S: Well it isn't just a sense impression; it's a wrong idea. The wrong idea being that because a facility exists, you've got to make use of it, without even stopping to think whether it's the right time for you to make use of that facility. It's as though using the facility is an end in itself. 'The facility must be used at all costs!' Even though there's no one ready to make use of the facility, in a real sense: at all costs the facility must be used! So that means that you are sacrificing yourself to the facility instead of sacrificing the facility to yourself; you're allowing the facility to make use of you rather than you make use of the facility. It's like when you see food, there's sometimes food left over and sometimes people say, "Oh, what a pity to waste this food", so they start eating it, even though they've already had enough to eat! (laughter) They don't want the food to be wasted. But it's wasted if you eat it after you've already had enough, just as much as if it had been thrown into the dustbin; it's still wasted. But they're so obsessed with not wasting that food that they have to sit down and actually eat it all themselves! So Meghiya was so obsessed with this idea that this mango-grove be used for meditation that he insists on going and meditating there himself, even though he's not ready to

go and meditate by himself. 'The mango-grove must be made use of at all costs.'

Anyway, the Buddha still doesn't agree. "Then a second time the Exalted One replied, 'Wait a little Meghiya, I am alone until some other monk arrives'." So what happens then? Would you like to read that next short paragraph?

Silaratna: (reads)

"Then yet a third time the venerable Meghiya made his request. The Exalted One replied, 'Well, Meghiya, what can I say when you talk of striving for concentration? Do what you think it the time for, Meghiya.'"

S: So, Meghiya made his request a third time, and of course the Buddha's custom is if you ask three times he either answers your question, or agrees to your request, or gives way, and so on. So on this occasion he says, "Well, Meghiya, what can I say when you talk of striving for concentration?" Well, I've always advised people to, yes, meditate, I've spoken in praise of meditation, if you put it that way, what can I say? I can't discourage you from meditating. Do you see what I mean? I mean, the Buddha sees that Meghiya doesn't really understand, so he says, well, if you press the point in that sort of way, what can I say? I can't say that meditation is no good, meditation is no use; you put me in a quite difficult position. So, "do what you think it is the time for, Meghiya", do as you think best. If you won't listen to the advice of the Buddha, if you use, so to speak, the Buddha's own arguments, the Buddha's own teachings against what he is telling you, then the Buddha has nothing further to say.

Gunapala: Do you think he thinks he's blackmailing the Buddha?

S: He's certainly putting pressure, I mean blackmailing is too strong a [28] word here, but he's certainly putting a sort of pressure on the Buddha.

Silaratna: It's the sort of 'fait accompli' situation that occurred with Prajapati ...

S: Well, it doesn't go as far as that; it would be a fait accompli situation if, without sort of asking the Buddha, he just went off and meditated; but he does ask. But on the other hand you could say, is the asking a real asking, is he really asking for permission. If he was really asking he would be prepared not to go and meditate in the mango-grove if the Buddha thought he shouldn't. He is as it were going through the form of asking; he's not really asking, he's not really open to what the Buddha says. I mean, he's correct in as much as he does ask, but his overall attitude or his basic, his underlying attitude is not really an attitude of asking, it's a formal asking, not a real asking. Very often people do that, they just go through the motions of doing something, as on this occasion Meghiya goes through the motions of asking for the Buddha's permission. He's already, it seems, made up his mind to do what he wants to do anyway.

Silaratna: So if you're properly asking you take into account the fact that you could be refused.

S: Yes, yes. So if you do this, if you sort of, er, go through the motions of asking, when really you've already made up your mind to do the very thing you're asking about, then what does that really mean?

Khemapala: You're telling the Buddha, almost.

S: Not only that, it means that, but also it means you're just seeking for confirmation. You're not really asking, you're not really open to the possibility of your request not being met; you've assumed that it will be met: you just want the other person's approval. But why should you want their approval? If you've made up your mind to do something, why not go ahead and do it? Why do you want somebody else's approval so that you have to go through the motions, so to speak, of asking for their permission? Well on one hand it would seem you don't want to accept responsibility for doing something yourself, so you ask somebody else to sort of approve, so that you can then, as it were, to some extent place the responsibility on him. And also it means you're seeing that other person as a sort of authority figure, to use that hackneyed phrase, hum? You want to do what you want to do, but you want the authority figure in your immediate environment to approve of what you are doing. So you ask him, or you go through the motions of asking him, for permission. But it's not a real permission, or not a real asking, rather, because you're just seeing that person as an authority figure, and wanting confirmation from him of what you've already decided to do. So it is not a genuinely spiritual situation, it is not a situation of spiritual communication, it is not a situation of 'Kalyana Mitrata': there is this authority figure in your environment whose disapproval you are perhaps afraid of or whose disapproval you maybe don't want, so you try to get him to approve of what you are doing. Often you find this when people ask you for advice: they really want you to approve of them doing what they've already made up their minds to do. This is why, for instance, this came up in a recent discussion, you may remember, why people go to mediums. The medium in many cases, it would seem, reflects back on to you as sort of advice, from the spirits, these higher authorities, just what you want to do. The Spirits authorize you through the medium to do what you want to do; it keeps you happy, doesn't it? (laughter)

[29]

Gunapala: One thing I thought of with this asking for permission, quite often it seems almost like habit or part of your duty, that you have to ask to be relieved; like it's his duty, for Meghiya to serve ...

S: To be with.

Gunapala: Yes, to be with the Buddha, and like he has to ask, it's kind of his duty; the Buddha's holding him back, and so, I know even in communities and so forth it's like your responsibility to ask, and that's quite often why you do it, not because you have a genuine feeling or that it's right, it's because ...

S: Well you're under some sort of compulsion. You don't want to go against what you see as the group, (not seeing it in this sort of situation as a spiritual community) you don't want to go against the group, you want the group's approval; at the same time you want to do what you want to do, and that seems to be the situation here except that it isn't a group, it's the Buddha, a sort of sole authority figure, as it were. Anyway, I had an experience of this sort very recently indeed. Someone wanted to do something - I'd better not give full details - and they'd already been told that I didn't think they should do it, but still they came to me and said they really ought to do it, for such and such a reason, and I still felt that they shouldn't do it, but I saw that this particular person had already made up his mind to do that, so I said all right, even though it wasn't really what he should have done, but I was just obliged to accept that.

Gunapala: Do you think it is OK., you know, when somebody is really persistent, they're pushing in their own direction, that they have to be let go?

S: Well, we were speaking in terms of the Buddha and Meghiya, therefore we're assuming, no doubt quite correctly, the Buddha is right and Meghiya is wrong; within a spiritual community it may not always be like that, because sometimes the spiritual community can actually act like a group unfortunately, and fall away from being a spiritual community and actually sort of put the wrong sort of pressure on the individual, you see what I mean? So for us the situation isn't quite so straightforward or obvious, it may be, well, in principle, your Kalyana Mitra gives you good advice, but you may not quite genuinely always be able to accept it, and he may not always, unfortunately, be absolutely right, do you see what I mean? It's as though it has to be worked out between you, but that's where the fierce friendship comes in: if you really think your Kalyana Mitra is giving you the wrong sort of advice, well you really have to say so and produce your argument, and he has to deal with those arguments. And in the end it becomes obvious to both parties where the truth lies, and what really should be done. I certainly wouldn't encourage mitras to think well that the Order Member who is their particular Kalyana Mitra is always right, and that they've got to follow implicitly whatever he says, I certainly wouldn't encourage that attitude, but at the least they must be willing very carefully to consider whatever he says, and be open to the possibility that they were wrong, and giving up what they wanted to do. At least they must be genuinely open to that possibility; which doesn't mean, at the same time, that whatever the Kalyana Mitra says is to be accepted and followed automatically. You've a right to thrash it out with him and assure yourself, and feel yourself, that the advice that he is giving is correct for you.

Gunapala: A bit more specific is the point that the Buddha actually did let Meghiya go after the third time, as if he can only resist, sort of say to Meghiya sort of 'no' so many times.

S: But what are you going to do? Can you hold back someone by force? Or can [30] you go on insisting, even after the third time and risk a rupture, can you risk that person being so determined to get his own way, or to go his own way, that in order to do that he breaks off communication with you altogether? You have to avoid that risk.

Gunapala: So you can't force someone in the spiritual life to go against their own feelings.

S: No, their own feelings right or wrong. The best you can do is at least keep the channels of communication open.

Murray: So you'd have to carefully consider that, for example, in the case of someone who wanted to leave a men's community.

S: Yes, yes. Even if you really believe that he shouldn't leave, and even if it's clear that the best thing for him would be not to leave, you can't so strongly insist that he mustn't leave and make such a big point of it that not only does he actually leave, but he feels it's quite impossible for him to ever discuss that sort of question with you again. He's experienced, from his point of view, such pressure from you that he just avoids you in the future. At the same time sometimes one just has to say to people quite clearly what you actually think; one owes that to them too. So it's not easy just to, er, gauge the exact point up to which you should go, beyond which whatever you say becomes undue pressure.

Prasannasiddhi: And then you get the situation in a community where there's tension between people and that's not very good, you can't even have a comfortable breakfast because there's this issue there which causes conflict.

S: In some communities, it did arise at Sukhavati at one stage, the question arose of, er, well what about people that didn't meditate in the shrine-room regularly, well how far should one go in talking to them, or in a sense putting pressure on them, because it could become counter-productive. (pause)

So, the Buddha simply says, after the third time, "Well Meghiya, what can I say when you talk of striving for concentration? Do what you think it the time for, Meghiya". He uses the customary expression. It's up to you. Ultimately the decision is with you, even a Buddha can't force you. Or one might say, least of all can a Buddha force you. (pause) All right then, let's read the next paragraph.

Prasannasiddhi: (reads)

"Accordingly the venerable Meghiya rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with his right side and went away to that mango-grove and on reaching it plunged into it and sat down for the midday rest at the foot of a certain tree."

S: So "Accordingly the venerable Meghiya rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with his right side" that is to say, he kept the Buddha on his right as he left. So, he's keeping up all the formalities, in a sense he might just as well not do so because he's not really listening to the Buddha, so in a sense he doesn't really respect the Buddha, but he's keeping up the external appearance of respect; well, one might say better that than nothing. But it is a little empty, one can't help feeling nonetheless. "And went away to that mango-grove and on reaching it, plunged into it and sat down for the midday rest at the foot of a certain tree." He's got his own way, the Buddha had, not exactly agreed, but the Buddha hadn't actually stopped him. One [31] can't really see how the Buddha could have done so anyway. So there Meghiya is within the mango-grove doing exactly what he wanted to do, sitting there, probably going to have a really good meditation at last.

Gunapala: Seems like he's going to have a sleep first of all! (laughter)

Prasannasiddhi: It's interesting that he uses the word 'plunged into it'.

Gunapala: It almost seems loaded, doesn't it?

S: Yes, sort of, ah! at last.' you know.

Murray: The cool of the mango-grove.

S: Yes, anyway, let's see what happens. Someone like to read the paragraph?

Gunapala: (reads)

"Now as the venerable Meghiya was staying in that mango-grove there came habitually upon him three evil, unprofitable forms of thought, to wit: thoughts lustful, thoughts malicious and

thoughts harmful. Then the venerable Meghiya thought thus: It is strange, in truth: It is a wonderful, in truth, that I who in faith went forth from home to the homeless should thus be assailed by these three evil, unprofitable forms of thought, to wit: thoughts lustful, thoughts malicious and thoughts harmful. So at eventide he arose from his solitude and went to the Exalted One, and on coming to him ... said, 'Sir, while I have been staying in that mango-grove there came habitually upon me three evil, unprofitable forms of thought ... Then Sir I thought: It is strange in truth. It is wonderful, in truth, that I ... should be assailed thus!'"

S: So that is the situation, that is what actually happens. Any sort of general reflections on that to begin with, on that sort of situation?

Murray: It seems to me that having gone through Meghiya's sort of lack of receptivity towards the Buddha that having sat down and having experienced these negative states, he is actually receptive enough to go back to the Buddha and say, well, this is ...

S: (interrupting) Well, he's had a great shock, I mean, the text is very brief, it doesn't go into lengthy descriptions or elaborate analysis, but clearly Meghiya has had a big shock, and why has he had a shock, and in what does the shock consist? Presumably he imagined that as soon as he got to that mango-grove, as soon as he had sat down and had a bit of a rest he'd at once go sailing away, you know, into some blissful dhyanic state and he overestimated his own capacities. He didn't realize in fact how much work he had to do. I mean, he is represented as saying to the Buddha, originally, that he has still a lot of work to do, so perhaps he hasn't realized how much he has to do or perhaps what kind of work he has to do, because clearly he wasn't expecting that "three evil, unprofitable forms of thought, to wit: thoughts lustful, thoughts malicious and thoughts harmful", should come upon him. He certainly wasn't expecting that. So that suggests he didn't know himself because he's very surprised; he says, 'It is strange, it's wonderful that I who in faith went forth from home to the homeless should thus be assailed.' Well, that's a bit naive, as it were (laughter); just by going forth from home and giving everything up and becoming a homeless wanderer you automatically get rid of thoughts of that kind, you automatically [32] get rid of unskilful mental states. It does seem in a way he is quite a naive sort of person.

Murray: (Penny in the slot mentality).

S: Perhaps he also hasn't realized the extent to which he benefited from the Buddha's company. We don't know how long after going forth he became the Buddha's personal attendant, we don't know that, but it could be that, you know, he's been with the Buddha perhaps since he went forth, or perhaps he's been with other more experienced disciples of the Buddha, and, er, he hasn't yet realized the extent to which he was dependent upon that positive contact and communication. He's been dreaming of going off and meditating on his own, thinking that he's ready.

One can't help remembering here, or recalling here, some people's experience of solitary retreat. They go on solitary retreat. Sometimes it has happened in the past that people went on a solitary retreat thinking that they were just going to immerse themselves in dhyanic bliss for a week or a month. But then they have the experience of all sorts of things, as we say, in this very well-known phrase, even hackneyed phrase, "coming up", all sorts of things come up which they hadn't expected. I mean, sometimes people, you know, tell me or write letters afterwards and they say, well, they were overcome by extraordinary feelings of sadness or

they started thinking about their father or their mother or they started having really hateful, angry feelings; they were really quite surprised - where do these feelings come from? They hadn't realized. Or they feel very, very afraid, or they feel terribly hungry and greedy; and it seems that Meghiya had this sort of experience. It's as though when you're on your own what is really there, when you're not under the influence of perhaps more positive factors, more positive surroundings, or in a sense more positive, I mean, what is really there has an opportunity to manifest itself. So Meghiya wasn't prepared for that; clearly he didn't know himself very well. He was surprised at what happened.

Prasannasiddhi: He seems to have an intellectual idea of what his spiritual life involves, you know, in terms of meditation and leading the homeless life, but actually emotionally he's not ...

S: Though he does say that, 'in faith he went forth from home', faith means having faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and no doubt he did have, but it clearly didn't go far enough; certainly his faith in the Buddha didn't go far enough because he's rejected the Buddha's quite considered advice three times repeated, he's gone directly against the Buddha's wishes to a quite extreme extent.

Silaratna: He might have had quite a sort of romantic view of the spiritual life.

S: Yes, he might have been thinking, well this is pretty humdrum, just going round with the Buddha and looking after him and receiving his visitors and just listening to the Buddha just repeating things that he's said a dozen times already; I mean, the spiritual life is really going off and meditating by yourself, especially in a mango-grove all ready there and waiting, what a pity to waste it, what a wonderful opportunity.

Gunapala: I get the picture too that the monks and the Buddha must have given a very positive, happy picture of the spiritual life.

S: Not only that; perhaps, as I said before he hadn't realized the extent [33] to which he depended on that Kalyana Mitrata. I mean, the assumption is that while he was with the Buddha, these thoughts didn't arise, so perhaps he hadn't realized that the fact that he wasn't in a positive mental state was not so much dependant on his own spiritual attainments but on the fact of the Buddha's influence, the fact that he was in the presence of the Buddha.

Prasannasiddhi: May be not even just, er, this may not just apply to Kalyana Mitrata in a vertical sense but even spiritual friendships, you know, even across the board, just the fact that you are together in a group rather than ...

S: (interrupting) You don't realize how much you owe to that sort of situation, as when you're living in a spiritual community you may be feeling really positive and really great - you forget that that is owing to a great extent to the fact that you're living in a spiritual community, you aren't producing it all out of your innards, as it were. So that if you go off on your own on the outside you don't necessarily take it all with you! People don't always realize that. Well, people who've been to Tuscany know, while you're here you're tremendously positive, and there's a lot that you carry with you, but after a year there may not be very much of it left because you can't generate that sort of atmosphere, you know, just by yourself, you can't generate the mental state that you were in, you know, then, in Tuscany all by yourself in

another kind of situation, not unless you're in an analogous situation, like another community, may be not quite so big or quite so strong as the one in Tuscany but still, you know, pretty good.

Murray: Well what about the Buddha, then, I mean, sort of on the level of the empirical mind, at least, in terms say of his dhyana, does that fluctuate with the Buddha, depending on ...

S: (interrupting) Well, dhyana would seem to fluctuate, in the case of the Buddha, or in the case of anyone from a stream-entrant upwards, but not insight, insight does not fluctuate, insight remains constant, but the dhyanic state, well yes, will certainly fluctuate. I mean, the Buddha himself, according to the general Buddhist tradition, is not represented as being always in a state of dhyana after his enlightenment. There was one school which believed that the Buddha always was but they were quite the exception. But the Buddha's vision, his insight, his bodhi we call it (indistinct).

Murray: But you would think that given the extent of his vision and his insight that that would have an effect or it would conduce to dhyanic state. He certainly would have all the ingredients like calm and joyousness.

S: Well yes, in as much as the Buddha attained insight or obtained enlightenment, there will be no greed, hatred and delusion, so his mental state would be calm, to the extent that it was free from these particular unskilful roots. But if the Buddha was having to occupy himself with external things, and with people and talk to people, then he would not be enjoying the same kind of concentration that he would have enjoyed had he been as it were sitting and meditating. But his insight would have remained constant.

Prasannasiddhi: As if it wouldn't fall below a certain level.

S: Yes, even his mental state, apart from his insight, if one can in fact separate them in that way, would not fall below a certain level of calm and positivity. (pause)

Murray: So if he sat down in the mango-grove his natural momentum would be [34] just to rise into it.

S: Yes, yes, there'd be no reason not to.

Prasannasiddhi: If he'd decided to ...

S: (interrupting) Yes, he's just like a balloon, you know, once the weight, once the rope holding it down was cut, it just automatically floats up, that's its nature. So what ties the Buddha down, as it were, is the fact that he has to deal with people, and give his attention to external situations. Once that factor is no longer there, once that rope is cut, so to speak, or at least lengthened, up goes the balloon, the Buddha rises into dhyana states.

Murray: So that even if you're not a Buddha, once you get to that level where that's your natural momentum, then presumably one wouldn't need to sit formally in meditation posture.

S: No, no. This is why, you know, when you're on solitary retreat your thoughts go where your mind is really at. The thoughts that you have reflect your real level, because there are no

external influences; well, one can't rule out external influences altogether, but if you're on a solitary retreat the present influence of other people can be ruled out. There's still the influence of nature which can be very positive.

Gunapala: Of course you bring a lot in your own mind ...

S: (interrupting) Yes, so what is actually in your own mind can come out, whether it is dhyana states that you don't usually have the opportunity of experiencing, or whether it's thoughts of greed, hatred and delusion. Or, I mean, some people find themselves writing poetry because under normal conditions they don't get the opportunity or the urge to write it there, so on solitary retreats sometimes they find themselves writing poetry, or writing long letters to people, doing things that they really want to do but haven't had the opportunity of actually doing. So on solitary retreat, in that sort of way you're completely free from external pressures as it were, not with other people, you find out among other things, not only where you actually are, but also what you really want to do, at least, to the extent that you can do it on your own. You might realize that you had a real craving for company, that you actually really want to be with other people, whether for skilful or unskilful reasons. So the solitary retreat is quite useful, it's like a sort of laboratory where you discover quite a few things about yourself. But this can happen even if you're just left alone for a few hours; I mean one order member wrote to me very recently that she found it almost impossible to have a solitary retreat, or even just to stay alone for an hour or two because she became overwhelmed by sort of panic feelings, feelings of anxiety, and so on, just wanted to be with people. Well that certainly told her, taught her quite a lot about herself. (pause)

Prasannasiddhi: What about this ... you mentioned, er, floating, that the Buddha would just float up, it sort of implies he doesn't actually sit there and decide consciously to kind of go into the dhyanas, but there's nothing happening, he just automatically ...

S: Well this raises the whole question of conscious decisions, not that he wouldn't realize what was happening, one couldn't speak of him in terms of sitting down and thinking, 'Ah, I'm all by myself now, I could do a spot of meditation'; it's as though in solitude the Buddha's, in a sense, or from a certain point of view, deeper nature is revealed, at least in the dhyanic [35] sense, that is only having, you know, having to attend to external things that is, as it were, preventing him from enjoying a more intensely concentrated mental stage.

Murray: So it's entirely natural for the Buddha.

S: Yes, his mental state tends to become more and more concentrated unless he is actually distracted, or allows himself to be distracted by the people with whom he has to deal, by virtue of the fact that he has to deal with people. But all the time, of course, his insight remains unaffected.

Murray: It's quite a thought.

S: Mm, yes. And of course at the same time even in dealing with people he never falls below a certain level of calm and positivity.

Gunapala: I mean, I can understand it quite clearly, but just to get a feel of how it affects the Buddha I find quite difficult to understand.

S: Well, it's not only difficult, one might say it's impossible - it's difficult enough to get the feel of another, say, unenlightened human being more or less on one's own level, I mean, what to speak of getting the feel, so to speak, of the Buddha.

Gunapala: Surely He wouldn't mind, he was enlightened, huh, he's got insight, he wouldn't mind whether he's in dhyana or whether he's just out of it. (sounds of agreement)

S: Yes, yes, because after all the experience of insight itself, one could say, is very satisfying. That's why I said you can't really too literally distinguish between the Buddha's vision, the Buddha's insight, and, so to speak, the rest of him. The vision affects his whole being, it's after all transformed his whole being. So in a sense the Buddha is in a diluted dhyanic state all the time, even when he's talking to people. But when he's not talking to people his sort of natural tendency, it would seem, would be for him to become even more concentrated, and as it were even more dhyanic.

Gunapala: What sort of an effect would that have, would that be a better effect, I mean, what ...

S: Well from the point of view of the Buddha, as Buddha, it wouldn't be better or worse, it wouldn't make him any the less the Buddha, it wouldn't make him any more the Buddha; it would just happen.

Prasannasiddhi: The thought occurred to me of Amitabha, who is depicted as he sits in Sukhavati on a lotus continually meditating. It's as if he's brought so many people up to his level, or up to a high level in a sense that he can just sit there in meditation.

S: Well, in his case one might say there's also the fact that at that level, or on that level, and in the case of people who reach that level, he can communicate as it were telepathically, he doesn't need even to speak, though, also some texts represent Amitabha as actually teaching in the Pure Land, in Sukhavati.

(Side Two)

Prasannasiddhi: Is it that he spent so long, er, helping sentient beings that he's built up this big kind of ... well he's raised the level of so many people's consciousnesses that he's built up ...

[36]

S: Well, yes, I mean many Mahayana Sutras represent the Buddha, you know, whether Amitabha or some other Buddha, as speaking from or after experiencing a samadhi state. This is not just a dhyana state in the more limited sense but, you know, but a state or experience of insight, he's speaking from that experience of insight. But I think when Amitabha is represented as in dhyana mudra, one mustn't take it too literally that he's just meditating in the ordinary sense; he's immersed in a higher state of consciousness, he's immersed in fact in an enlightened state of consciousness. So in his case the dhyana mudra doesn't just indicate dhyana but indicates enlightenment itself, and if he does speak, he speaks out of that sort of experience, that sort of state.

Murray: You look at him holding the flower in the same way: he's just communicating.

S: Yes, he's just communicating. You could say even if the Buddha sits cross legged in dhyana mudra, he is as it were saying, "Well, you ought to meditate." (pause) But it is said in the case of the Buddha there are three postures, one doesn't necessarily associate him only with dhyana mudra, there is the seated posture and then there is the reclining posture, and then there is the standing and/or walking up and down. These are the "noble postures" of the Buddha, I forget the actual terms, varya? something or other.

Gunapala: What is reclining, does reclining mean leaning back on one hand? It's not lying down?

S: Reclining is lying at full length on one side with the head supported by the right hand and of course the right arm resting on the elbow. This is called the Lion Posture, the lion is supposed to lie down to rest and sleep like that and that's the posture the Buddha assumed at the time of the Parinirvana.

Gunapala: And it's usually always connected with that, isn't that its main sort of connection?

S: Yes, that is its main connection, its best-known connection, at least.

Khemapala: Would the Buddha normally sleep like that, on his right side?

S: Yes, yes. For it is said in any case to be better to sleep on one's right side - that's the opposite side from the heart, so if you sleep on the right side you're not bringing any undue pressure to bear on the heart, so it is said, I don't know with what authority or what validity, it's better to go to sleep on the right side.

Prasannasiddhi: So these three postures represent the only postures the Buddha assumed, or ...

S: The Buddha apparently, this is again according to tradition, does not run, he does not jump, he does not sprawl, in other words, his postures are expressive, this is the real meaning of the tradition: his postures are expressive of his mental state, his enlightened mental state. A Buddha behaves in a harmonious and one might say agreeable fashion, his very postures are of that nature. He doesn't adopt disagreeable or unharmonious postures.

Gunapala: The figures of Bodhisattvas, I mean, this is why I connected with the reclining one, is quite often you get Bodhisattvas who are slightly sort of relaxed - looking and leaning back with one hand supporting them. [37] They look very relaxed and calm.

S: Well Bodhisattvas are in a different category, their significance is archetypal, you know, rather than historical. And Bodhisattvas are represented in the form of young princes, that is to say, they are represented in a royal form, as it were, and one of those postures that you refer to, that more relaxed posture, is called the "raja lila asana", the posture of royal amusement you might say or enjoyment, play; the relaxed sort of way a king sits because of his complete sort of sense of security. And the same way the Bodhisattva is secure in his own enlightenment, his own Wisdom and compassion, he's completely relaxed. That's the general significance of that particular posture. And no doubt the Buddha himself, the historical Buddha, when he sat, he didn't sit stiffly, he sat no doubt in a relaxed sort of way, you know, upright, erect, but at the same time relaxed, not stiff, not in a sort of military way.

Prasannasiddhi: Presumably he would have sat in sort of royal ease ...

S: I don't remember that he is ever described as sitting in that ... He is described as leaning against something, leaning against the central pillar of the hall or something of that kind. But it's quite clear from all of the descriptions of the Buddha he always behaved in a dignified manner Well what we would regard as a dignified sort of way.

: And Manjusri () talks about the whole assembly being (moved by how dignified he was?)

S: No doubt this is all based on some actual tradition regarding the Buddha's actual appearance and attitude and behaviour. There were other enlightened teachers like Milarepa who behave in a different way. Milarepa was more playful and childlike. Maybe that was also an appropriate expression of the enlightened mind or the enlightened consciousness, but in the case of the Buddha his mode of expression was always calm and dignified and controlled and even imposing, even impressive.

: He was a Prince though ...

S: Well yes, but one should be careful perhaps ...

: (interrupting) But he would take the best of that conditioning ...

S: Well, yes, but he wouldn't take it as a conditioning, it would be a direct expression, you know, of his enlightened mind in terms of what was appropriate to the situation. He wouldn't be sort of retaining that conditioning as conditioning, huh? I mean, even if he hadn't been brought up as a prince, even if he'd been brought up in a very lowly family, he still would have behaved in that, as it were, princely fashion, had it been appropriate. (pause)

Anyway, let's go on, let's go back to the actual text. The point that was emerging, the point from which we took our departure was that Meghiya came to know himself better; he clearly hadn't realized what might happen, he didn't know himself well enough for that. So when those particular thoughts did assail him, it was quite a shock and he felt the need to go and ask or tell the Buddha about it. He hadn't realized, this was another point we went into, the extent to which he was dependent for his positive mental state, as it seems it had been, on the presence of the Buddha himself, hum? And of course we also touched on the fact that he did seem rather naive in thinking, as apparently he did think, that by virtue of his just going forth from home into the homeless life, all unskilled mental states would automatically be banished. Sometimes people [think], if you move into a community all problems will be solved, if you go on a retreat, or if you're ordained, well, the slate is wiped clean as well, in a sense it is. [37b] It reminds me of a, you know, anecdote about Rama Krishna, one of the well known modern Indian Hindu spiritual teachers. He was once asked whether it was true, as Hindu tradition maintained, that when you took a bath, you know in the River Ganges, all your sins were washed away. He was asked this question whether that ancient tradition was true, because many Hindus believe this, that as you take a dip in the Ganges, the Ganges is so holy, because it flows down straight from the locks of Shiva, all your sins will be washed away. So this was the question Rama Krishna was asked. So he said, yes, it's quite true, when you take a dip in the Ganges, all your sins are washed away. But he said they take the form of crows, and they sit on the banks of the Ganges and, you know, when you come out of the River Ganges, they come back again, you see. (laughter) So it's a bit like that. No doubt, you

know, while you're on retreat, yes, the slate is wiped clear, but when you come out of the retreat, well what happens? It's as though the crows were waiting for you - they come back. Perhaps they don't come back in quite the same force, one can at least say that, there has been some, as it were, relatively permanent effect on you, by your, say, one month or three month retreat (?), Sometimes the crows don't come back straight away, but usually [38] at least some of them come back, sooner or later.

Gunapala: To plague you.

S: To plague you, yes.

Gunapala: But something I felt in the centre of it where he thought, you know, he was amazed that this had happened to him, seeing his intention also was so pure, he thought it was so pure, you know, his motive was ...

S: Well in principal or in theory it was good, but he just didn't realize where he basically was at, he didn't realize the extent to which he depended on his, let's say, positive mental state on being with the Buddha. He certainly hadn't realized that. So it's as though as soon as he was away from the Buddha, all the demons were released, the demons of greed, hatred and delusion; and he wasn't ready to face them, he wasn't in a position to cope with them. He had to go straight back to the Buddha. Luckily he had enough sense to do that and the Buddha wasn't very far away. I mean supposing it had been modern times and the Buddha had taken a plane and he was in some other country! (laughter and pause)

Prasannasiddhi: It's interesting, you were saying this business about crows coming back again when you come out of the river and, er, then also saying about when you go on retreat, and in a sense you get purified, you become more pure, but then when you come back it all comes back again, or most of it, well then how do you sort of get rid of it permanently in that case?

S: Well the Buddhist view certainly is that you get rid of the unskilful mental states permanently only through Insight and Insight arises only in dependence - arises only in dependence, at least on a certain measure of calm and tranquillity, that is to say dhyana or samatha which comes about usually in connection with actual meditation practice. So you need to find a situation in which you're first of all able to develop dhyana and then be able to develop on the basis of that dhyana Insight. It's only when you've got Insight that you're permanently free from those sort of unskilful mental states. So you need basically to develop your capacity for Insight, which is not necessarily just thinking in terms of suffering, and impermanence and selflessness in an abstract sort of theoretical kind of way: you've just got to deepen your understanding of life, you've got to deepen your understanding of existence itself. And you can do this also through study, especially perhaps study of the Dharma, obviously, in the sense of the study of the Sutras. But you need calm and you need concentration, and that you get from your meditation practice, that sort of feeds, you know, over, feeds back into your study. So you could say that there are these two, in a way, basic practices, or perhaps we could even say three, for reasons which I'll mention in a minute. There's meditation, which, you know, helps you to unify your consciousness, helps you to develop concentration, makes you emotionally more positive. There's study which helps you ultimately, you know, to develop Insight. Unless you have the experience of dhyana in some form or another, then your study will never actually give rise to Insight, but only to a sort of intellectual understanding. The third thing that you need is, no doubt, puja, in some form or

other; or at least, you know, contact with some very positive and stimulating and inspiring emotional element or source of emotional nourishment.

Gunapala: Would Kalyana Mitrata come into that last ...?

S: Well, ideally, in the case of Kalyana Mitrata is a context for all of these. Because if you have Kalyana Mitrata well you'll be enjoying, you know, positive mental states in company with your spiritual friends, or, so to speak, [39] meditating; you'll be studying with them, you'll be, you know, doing puja with them, maybe listening to music with them, studying poetry with them; you'll get all of these three things that I've mentioned in the context of Kalyana Mitrata. I mean, if the Kalyana Mitrata is a full Kalyana Mitrata, a developed Kalyana Mitrata and is not just limited to a quick walk round the park every Friday afternoon.

Prasannasiddhi: So perhaps ... could you say perhaps that maybe the third category is more, not only puja but one's general lifestyle, in terms of, you know, harmonious situations like ...

S: Well those are important, but I think puja represents more than that. Puja seems to bring out, or to establish contact with, you know, what for want of a better term we call the archetypal element. It's a bit more than emotional, it would seem; there's the ritual element involved, that seems to be important, huh? So I think that the puja is still quite important, I don't think, as I say, it's not just important for emotional reasons, it's almost like a sort of drama, something is acted out, just like seeing a drama, seeing a stage play, it's quite a different experience from reading a book, even the book of that play; in the same way taking part in the puja is quite different from even reading, say, devotional verses, because it's acted out; a third element, a third dimension is introduced, it's not only speech and mind it's also body that is involved.

Gunapala: Is there an element of magic in it?

S: One could even say that, that is where the ritual element comes in, or rather magic comes into that, one could say, without actually going into, well, what is magic; but using the word magical in a broad sort of sense, yes, there is a magical element in the puja.

Murray: You sort of conjure up spiritual forces within you.

S: Yes, yes, you do. By your mental state, by your words and by your acts. Something is created, something sort of happens between you in the course of the puja, I mean, assuming the puja is a good puja, a real puja. And also there's light, there's colour, all these things are emotionally significant - there are flowers, there are offerings.

Murray: Yes, that's quite a point isn't it; so the Enlightened state isn't just an abstract ideal but it's actually living and vibrant with colour and smells and so on.

S: And it also occurs to me that puja is in a way creative; in the sense that when you perform a puja you're creating something, in as much as what is sort of subjective is made objective - you don't only say, "Oh, I'm very devoted to the Buddha!"; you actually make offerings, whether flowers or lights and so on. So what is internal is made external, and that in a way is the essence of creativity; where you write a poem, you're making what is internal external, and you're communicating in that particular way. Because other people can't read your

thoughts but they can read your poem, they can read your sonnet. So a puja is creative and for the vast majority of people they don't normally engage in any creative activity in the strict sense. So puja is a sort of avenue for creativity. That also assumes that you don't just sit there listening to other people as it were reciting. You also join in, you also take part. You cannot be a spectator at a puja. Well, you can be, but then that is quite a different thing from actually participating in a puja, you don't participate by being a spectator, even though just being a [40] spectator can be quite inspiring. But to gain full benefit from the puja you have to be a participant, you have to create. That's why sometimes it's good if you make your own offerings, or at least offer them yourself; if someone hands you a candle at least you offer it yourself. The action is performed by you. So your inner feeling of devotion finds outer expression in the active, in the offering of the flower or the candle. So to that extent there is some creative element present. And also, you know, by, say, offering flowers and candles to the Buddha or Bodhisattvas, well you make them be present: if you act as though they are present, well they are more likely to be present, so the feeling of their being present is created, or as Murray said they are sort of conjured up, they are invoked.

Khemapala: Do you think we could make any more of this creative thing? I thought while I was on my solitary that, well I used to make the offerings in my mind, you know, sprinkling perfume on the ground and offering giant mandaravas ...

S: (interrupting) Well, it's difficult to get giant mandarava flowers so they have to (be offered) mentally! But actually it is the tradition that mental puja definitely has a place, making mental offerings, making offerings mentally, is a much more advanced practice to which you go on when you've had prolonged experience of actual material pujas, where you're actually offering material things in kind.

Khemapala: I was thinking of it in terms of acting, it does, I think help if you can actually do, go through the motions, it does sort of have an effect and we could do more of that in our pujas.

S: Well it was quite interesting to see on the first and second Tuscany the way in which the pujas developed, in the broadest sense. The second time was even better than the first because the organizers were more experienced, they knew what to bring. The first Tuscany we experienced rather a shortage of, you know, shrine-cloths and things like that. Come the second Tuscany the organizers were well prepared, so we had lots of coloured cloths and could do quite a bit of decorating, and so therefore if it was the night when we had the puja of a particular Buddha or particular Bodhisattva, the shrine would be decorated accordingly, appropriately, in the appropriate colour, for instance. And that really helped very much, it gave additional richness to the shrine and therefore to the puja as a whole, and people became more inventive in the matter of offerings. But here again, it must be real creativity, it's not a question of, say, a notice goes up on the board everybody's got to make something, everybody's got to make an offering, so you're racking your brains to think what sort of offering you can make! Because in a way, you're racking your brains as to what sort of feeling could you have, and you shouldn't have to do it like that.

Murray: It's noticeable when you do a puja where you spend all day preparing offerings, in the psychological sense it is therapeutic, maybe it sort of opens the channels up.

S: Well, you're making something. I mean you needn't even call it creativity, you're making

something, and there's that childlike element in you which enjoys making something, which enjoys even making a mud pie, or cutting out things from bits of paper with a pair of scissors. Well, your sort of starved and thwarted and frustrated creative instinct is finding some little expression in that, just making things.

Murray: So you're suggesting that the creative, er, instinct, if you like, is [41] dead or dormant in people but it's just generally frustrated?

S: Well, these are all different terms, I think, for much the same sort of thing, you know the creative instinct, if one can speak in those terms, doesn't normally find much of an outlet in people's lives. You give them a chance, very often, you know, just to make something; well that making something can become actually creative, perhaps quite easily.

Silaratna: It seems important, though, in that context of puja that you're making something for something, as opposed to just making something. Because it brings to mind a building-site, you know, you do some work, you're creating something, but you're not really offering it. Well, it seems like you're not offering it to something, but in a puja you're offering it to the Bodhisattvas.

S: Yes, I mean, a child likes to make something for mother or father, maybe something in a way quite useless, but the child likes to think it's making it for someone.

Gunapala: It makes quite a difference.

S: I mean, I sometimes get things in the post that various children of various friends and mitras, mostly women friends and women mitras, sent of course via their loving mothers, something that they've made or done or drawn for me. This happens every now and then. But the children like to do that, like to do it for somebody. Draw a picture for someone, something of that sort.

Gunapala: We are strange in that way; even as young children we want to have a reason for doing things quite often.

S: But is it a reason for doing things, in that sort of sense? Maybe you want to communicate, and there's no point in doing it if it isn't going to be a means of communication. So maybe creation is communication. (pause) Anyway, how did we get to that particular point? Ah yes, there's the need for creativity in making puja offerings, therefore need for puja as well as the need for study, let us say, and meditation. So it's as though you not only need meditation and study you need also faith, to use traditional terms.

Prasannasiddhi: I was wondering if you couldn't include anything else in that, such as making your external environment harmonious.

S: Well, I'm sure people get satisfaction from that, if they're creating their room, if you've got a room to decorate and the means of decorating it. People do enjoy doing this.

Prasannasiddhi: And maybe also a certain amount of formality in your contact with other people, or some harmonious approach to your contact with other people also is a basis for ... you know, your general living situation, making it more conducive to ...

S: Well, you do find that this happens in Buddhist monasteries, traditionally, especially perhaps in the Zen monastery, where everything is not only functionally adapted to what they are there to do, i.e. meditate, but also aesthetically pleasing and significant and restrained. So that your whole environment is sort of playing upon your sensibilities in a particular kind of way which is very positive and which is helping you in your basic endeavour rather than going against it, rather than sort of subtly frustrating it all the time.

[42]

Murray: So all of this would suggest then, probably, that Meghiya was quite emotionally dry.

S: Yes, he was emotionally dry in the sense that he was not able to generate positive mental states by himself. It was as though the positive mental states that he had been apparently enjoying, were simply reflections or more or less reflections of the Buddha's highly positive mental state, and he was thinking that the positivity that he was enjoying was his own. He assumed it would continue when he went off to the mango-grove, in fact he assumed it would perhaps quite easily increase. In other words, he hadn't realized the extent he was dependent for his positivity, on his positive environment, in the form of the Buddha. He didn't know himself very well. It's not the case that he should not eventually become independent of the Buddha, surely he must, the Buddha surely would have wanted that; but there is such a thing as being prematurely weaned. (laughter) Yes, the child must be weaned one day, but, you know, if the child is prematurely weaned he may just die from want of nourishment. He may not be able to digest food other than his own mother's milk. So Meghiya was trying to wean himself prematurely, one might say.

I mean, certainly, it wasn't the case that people always remained with the Buddha because, you know, they couldn't afford not to remain with the Buddha. I mean, sooner or later he would have to stand on his own feet, in every sense, in every respect. But he didn't realize, it seems, that now was not the time, he was not ready to do that. He still needed, in the interest of his own spiritual growing-up, to be with the Buddha. He has, maybe, feelings of pseudo-independence. Some people think there's a sort of merit in doing things on one's own. It's as though they've got to do them on their own at all costs. It's a sort of false pride that prevents them from recognizing the fact that they do, quite objectively, depend for certain things on other people. If you try to help them they say, 'Oh, no, it's all right, I can do it myself, don't think I'm incapable.' Old people sometimes get like that. They can't objectively recognize that they do need the help of other people, that they're not able to do things for themselves any more. So they try to do things and they get into difficulties and they get very annoyed and even furious. I've seen some like this.

Gunapala: I've seen some people, I think it's more they don't want other people to influence their life, they want them to be the controlling factor, the influence of their life. And the thought of other people interfering with their life, they want to be the creator, they want to have the say in what is to be created.

S: Well, it's not even a question of just a say; very often they want to do everything themselves, for themselves. They don't like the idea of being, as they would say, under an obligation to another person. That is a pseudo sort of independence because you're under obligation to all sorts of people all the time. You shouldn't try to disguise the fact from yourself. You're under obligation to the man who brings you your milk, after all, you didn't go and milk the cow; you're dependent on other people doing all those things. So, as you get

older, you shouldn't have any logical objection to accepting a bit more direct help from other people, if you're not able to do for yourself all the things that you used to do. I mean, sometimes you don't accept the fact that you can't reach up and take down a heavy box any more; you've got to ask a younger person to do it for you. To try to do it yourself and risk straining yourself or having a heart attack is just silly. But lots of older people behave in that sort of way.

Murray: But this is like the essence of the personality view, isn't it?

[43]

S: Yes, yes. Your feelings of pseudo independence strengthens your pseudo self experience. (pause) It is true that there mustn't be in the spiritual life any such thing as neurotic dependence on other people, but that doesn't mean that there cannot or should not or indeed must not be any dependence on other people at all. You can't get on without other people, you can't do anything without other people. There's hardly anything you can do on your own, actually. One has to accept this and utilize it in the interests of the spiritual life. Which brings in the question of spiritual friends and your objective, positive dependence for certain things, in certain respects on those spiritual friends.

Anyway, I think we'll stop on that note because it is a quarter to one and we start an entirely new subject which I think we can leave until tomorrow.

END OF DAY 1

Tape Three

S: All right then; let's carry on. Page 42, someone like to read?

Silaratna: (reads)

"Meghiya, when the heart's release is immature, five things conduce to its maturity. What five? Herein, Meghiya, a monk has a lovely intimacy, a lovely friendship, a lovely comradeship. When the heart's release is immature this is the first thing that conduces to its maturity. Then again, Meghiya, a monk is virtuous, he abides restrained with the restraint of the obligations, he is perfect in the practice of right behaviour, sees danger in trifling faults, he undertakes and trains himself in the ways of training. When the heart's release is immature, this, Meghiya, is the second thing that conduces to its maturity."

S: All right, let's stop there. You remember the situation, you remember what has happened: Meghiya has gone off on his own to that mango-grove despite the Buddha's advice, and he's been assailed by thoughts of greed, hatred and delusion. So he's come back to the Buddha, rather surprised, perhaps even rather shaken. He's asking the Buddha why this is; why he should have been assailed by those thoughts, since after all he had gone forth from home into the homeless life in faith: with faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; and he is wanting to meditate. So the Buddha doesn't reply very directly, as it were, he says, "Meghiya, when the heart's release is immature, five things conduce to its maturity". He's suggesting, of course, that Meghiya's heart, Meghiya's mind is as yet unreleased, he hasn't yet gained Enlightenment, and that he is in fact immature, not fully developed spiritually. He's as it were gently reminding Meghiya of that fact. And he's reminding him, as we shall see, that one of the very

things that he needed, or one of the very things that is needed generally, he had abandoned, that is to say, you know, "the lovely intimacy", as it's translated here. The footnote does say "Kalyana Mitrata". The text not only says Kalyana Mitrata, not only lovely intimacy, but 'lovely friendship' and 'lovely comradeship'. There is some distinction between these two; maybe one should not make too much of it, the repetition is more sort of in the nature of emphasis; but let me just see what the text says here. (pause) ("Kalyana Mitta hoti, Kalyana sampavanko, aparipikaya, Meghiyo citta vimutti, etc.,'). So the text only actually gives two of these and maybe that is a mistake, the translator restored one of them, there's not only Kalyana Mitrata, which we usually translate as spiritual friendship; there's Kalyana sampavanko, which is here [44] translated as friendship. It's difficult to see why Kalyana Mitrata should be 'intimacy'. Let me just see what the dictionary says about Kalyana sampavanko. (pause) It's probably some fine shade of difference in meaning in these two terms. It may be under Kalyana, it may be under ... (pause) Yes, it's something like 'good companionship'. (pause). There doesn't seem to be any real difference between sampavanko and sahaya. It's not so much that there are three different kinds of things here, but three roughly similar terms for the same sort of thing.

Prasannasiddhi: So we have the 'Kalyana...'

S: So we have 'Kalyana Mitrata', in Pali (Kalyana Sahaya) and Kalyana sampavanko.

Silaratna: How do you spell that last one, Bhante?

S: Sampavanko. So 'Kalyana Mitta' or Mitrata, or 'Kalyana sahaya' and 'Kalyana sampavanko', or as it's translated here, "lovely intimacy, lovely friendship, lovely comradeship". So, or as we might say, spiritual intimacy, spiritual friendship, spiritual comradeship. But perhaps one mustn't look for too much of a difference between the meanings of these three terms. They all point to one and the same thing, which we usually call just Kalyana mittata or Kalyana Mitrata, spiritual friendship.

So the Buddha is saying that when the heart's release is immature, when Enlightenment has not yet been attained, then five things conduce to its maturity, and of these the first is Kalyana mittata, Kalyana Mitrata, or, as we say, spiritual friendship. So the Buddha is putting spiritual friendship right in the fore-front of the spiritual life. The footnote indeed calls attention to that, it says, "Kalyana mittata is often called 'the whole of the Brahma-life'" and then it says refer to Mrs Rhys Davids' Manual of Buddhism; we don't have that here, unfortunately. She clearly has something to say about it.

Prasannasiddhi: Should this Kalyana Mitrata be taken to mean in the terms of vertical friendship or should it be taken as horizontal or should it be taken as any friendship, with anyone kind of leading the spiritual life?

S: It would seem to be used in the broader sense. Though here, in as much as the reference was to the spiritual friendship with which the Buddha was providing Meghiya, but which Meghiya was unable to recognize, or the value of which he didn't appreciate; the reference here would seem to be to, you know, a spiritual friendship of the vertical rather than the horizontal kind. But in what he says, the Buddha is not, it seems, especially stressing that. He's speaking of spiritual friendship generally, both horizontal and vertical, it would seem.

Prasannasiddhi: And there's almost Sangha, in a way.

S: Yes, yes. So it's quite pertinent that the Buddha mentions spiritual friendship first. Meghiya has not realized his need for spiritual friendship. He thought that he could go it alone, he thought that he could do it all by himself. Well, there's nothing wrong with doing it all by oneself if one can; the question that arises is, well, can one really do it all by oneself in that sort of way? I mean, Meghiya thought that he could. But he discovered in fact that he was wrong and that he had been depending on the Buddha's spiritual friendship or on the spiritual friendship he derived from the Buddha more than he realized. So this is why perhaps the Buddha in his reply mentions [45] spiritual friendship first of the five things which conduce to the maturity of the heart's release.

Prasannasiddhi: Why do you think that that should be given first, would you say there was ...

S: You mean friendship?

Prasannasiddhi: Yes.

S: Well, extrinsically, so to speak, it's mentioned first because it's most relevant to that particular situation.

Murray: What do you mean extrinsically and intrinsically?

S: Well, intrinsic means 'on its own account', extrinsic means 'on account of some other factor', some factor other than itself. So when I say it's first extrinsically, it just happens to be enumerated first because it's particularly relevant to Meghiya's case. Not that it is first in itself, or absolutely the most important under all circumstances, not necessarily; but it could be. It could be intrinsically the most important, regardless of the particular circumstances, that is also possible. I mean, certainly we know that it is very important. One might, could even say, well yes, in view of certain other passages elsewhere in the Pali Canon, you know, spiritual friendship is intrinsically the first, because the Buddha does say it's the whole of the Brahma life, in a sense it's not just the first; it's all, it's everything.

Gunapala: The line starts off "when the heart's release is immature", when anybody whose heart is immature, this is the first step that they need.

S: Yes, yes, not just Meghiya, so to speak.

Prasannasiddhi: That's even before such things as meditation and even study and things like that?

S: Well, I think one has to be a little cautious here. Because what makes the spiritual friend the spiritual friend? I mean, the spiritual friend is a spiritual friend because he as it were embodies states which are spiritual. This is why sometimes Kalyana Mitrata is translated not as 'spiritual friendship' but 'friendship with what is spiritual', in the sense of spiritual states of mind. So you associate with spiritual friends or spiritual friends are spiritual friends on account of their spiritual qualities, or spiritual states. What you're really associating with, when you associate with spiritual friends is a certain quality of mind, a certain kind of attainment, that you can experience for yourself, by yourself, if you're so able, in meditation.

That's also perhaps not spiritual friendship, but it is certainly friendship with the spiritual, you see what I mean? So one mustn't make too much of a hard and fast distinction between spiritual friendship in the certain sense of associating with your spiritual friends on the one hand and meditating on the other. They're not sort of opposites, they're not mutually exclusive.

Gunapala: It's still an intimacy with the spiritual.

S: Yes. When you're meditating you're enjoying spiritual friendship then, but that's more difficult, maybe it's less fun. When you're associating with spiritual friends you're enjoying the same sort of mental states that you enjoy, say, when you're meditating. Perhaps the more easily.

[46]

Prasannasiddhi: It strikes me that it would be a lot easier to have strong feelings for your spiritual friends, you know, than it would be easy to sort of have those feelings just sitting there ...

S: Well, in the case of meditation it all takes place within your own mind, which is in a sense where ultimately it has to take place. But in the case of spiritual friendship it takes place between two minds, one of which can stimulate the other, or which can stimulate each other. Whereas if you're meditating you have, so to speak, to stimulate yourself, which isn't always so easy. But in both cases you're concerned with the development or the experiencing of the same spiritual qualities.

Murray: But when you think that once you get your meditation going, you actually experience deeper Kalyana Mitrata than you would, say, in correspondence with another person, even if it was a spiritual friend.

S: Well, that would depend, because if your association was with the Buddha, presumably your experience would be even deeper than it would be if you were just by yourself, however well you were getting on with your meditation. The Buddha is an enlightened being and perhaps in your meditation you're only experiencing dhyana states.

Prasannasiddhi: The Buddha has insight as well as the capacity for dhyana. Whereas you in meditation have only got capacity for dhyana.

Murray: So as a general point, then, could you say that it would be more important to associate with a spiritual friend who has attained to some degree of insight than it would be necessarily to go away and meditate?

S: Well, it's assuming that you could take advantage of whatever you gained from that spiritual friend. And perhaps you wouldn't be able to take full advantage of it without some experience of meditation.

Murray: Would the criteria for taking advantage of what the spiritual friend has to offer, would that be sort of entirely a subjective thing, you know, to do with your own calm or would it have something to do with the external situation?

S: Well it might be in regard to your needs and what you were capable of. I mean, how much further you were capable of going at that particular time. It could be that even though a Buddha was around, he was wasted on you; you may not even be able to appreciate the fact that he was a Buddha. It's quite clear Meghiya didn't fully appreciate his good fortune in being, you know, the Buddha's personal attendant. He seems to have been quite blind to that, quite oblivious to that, even though he'd gone forth with faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. It doesn't seem to have been a very full or a very deep faith.

Prasannasiddhi: There's this thing that's mentioned that very often the next level that one needs is just someone who's a little bit further ahead than oneself. Rather than if you have a Buddha up there, well, you know, he can still give you the next step but so can someone else, it seems, in terms of friendship, maybe even someone quite close to your level.

Gunapala: It seems quite strange what you said about having to meditate, to be able to utilize your spiritual friend if he is more developed.

S: Well I put it more technically than that: I spoke in terms of insight. [47] I mean, if you're to really benefit from somebody else's insight, you've got to develop insight yourself. But you can't develop insight without some experience of, well, let's say meditation, in the sense of some experience of samatha, some experience of the dhyanas, some degree of concentration; and emotional positivity, and that you build up, so to speak, with the help of meditation.

Gunapala: It seems to contradict Meghiya's situation though, where he can't meditate because he's immature, basically; he needs friendship first. Maybe it's on quite a low level, maybe he can't relate to the Buddha.

S: It would seem then that the kind of spiritual friendship that he needs is on quite a low level, yes.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose, in a similar way, that your full capacity for meditation is the higher dhyanas, but most people can't utilize that capacity because they're just not ready for it. In the same way with friendship, you may not be ready for the, sort of, peaks of friendship but you could utilize it on the immediate kind of level.

S: Perhaps one should distinguish between spiritual friendship and transcendental friendship. You may be ready for spiritual friendship and in a position to benefit from it but that doesn't mean that you're ready for transcendental friendship. What the Buddha was in fact offering or had offered Meghiya, or at least what he made available to Meghiya, was transcendental friendship. But Meghiya wasn't just ready for that. What he needed was ordinary spiritual friendship.

But nonetheless, Kalyana Mitrata, whether spiritual friendship or transcendental friendship, or both, is put first. And the fact that the Buddha says elsewhere that spiritual friendship is the whole of the Brahmacharya, the Holy Life as we say, means that it doesn't come first just by accident or just in relation to the specific situation with Meghiya, or his specific experience. It's as it were intrinsically first. It's first in a way because, as I said, it's all; or all in all.

Prasannasiddhi: It comes even first before meditation.

S: It would seem to, doesn't it?

Murray: Well, you learn meditation from spiritual friends.

S: Yes, yes.

Prasannasiddhi: Maybe even more than that: maybe you actually ... because it refers to ... you were saying that in a sense, insight just relates to just knowing the facts of life, in a way, the reality of life. And so that in the context of a friendship with someone else who's alive and is living, you sort of learn the realities of life.

S: Yes, yes. There's quite a lot of things you never actually learn unless somebody tells you. I can think just at the moment of a rather amusing instance of this which occurred a few days ago, but it's a bit inappropriate in the present context so I won't mention it now. I might mention it later on! (laughter) (pause)

But this question of spiritual friendship has been discussed, you know, over and over again, within the 'Friends' and on study retreats and in study groups. [48] So perhaps we don't need to go into it very much further, unless there's some aspect of it we haven't explored so far.

Gunapala: Just that one point Prasannasiddhi made, sort of expanded it slightly in a different direction for me, that through Kalyana Mitrata one is gaining insight into reality, in a sense into the communication, the relationship of life as it were. And understanding that and participating in that one is gaining insight, rather than seeing insight as being gained through meditation.

S: Or through books.

Gunapala: Or through books, yes. It's something which is gained through Kalyana Mitrata.

S: Well this does seem to come out very much in the Zen tradition. I mean, Zen people do meditate, they meditate quite a lot; in some forms of Zen sitting meditation is very, very much emphasized. But at the same time in Zen there is the tradition of the dialogue, the dialogue with the Zen master. And it would seem that in that sort of context that insight is at least equally likely to arise, in that sort of exchange, maybe that even quite sharp exchange between the master and the disciple. It's as though the master is prodding, not to say provoking the disciple into some kind of, let's say, Enlightenment experience. The disciple isn't always just sitting and quietly meditating; he does that, yes, too. I mean in some forms of Zen quietly and in other forms of Zen not so quietly, especially where they use Koans But in the case of the interview with the master, or the dialogue with the master, a definite exchange takes place in the course of which, or in the context of which, insight can actually arise. It doesn't arise, and this is the main point, merely in the context of meditation.

Prasannasiddhi: It's a bit as if the Zen master's standing on the other side of the fence, and he can see you exactly as you are and he can see exactly what is wrong, why you're not sort of enlightened.

S: Yes, what you need to break through.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, and provoke that area, whereas if you're on your own generally you don't have much of a clue.

S: You mean, if you're on your own you just have some very general guidelines which you apply as best you can to yourself in the light of your own knowledge of yourself, which may be quite limited, well, by virtue of the fact that you are unenlightened. So the Zen master can see what the disciple can't see for himself. He sees just which particular area he needs to work on. He can feel, so to speak, just where the weakness is. I mean, it's very difficult really to see one's own weaknesses; this is very well known, I mean, on whatever level, it's very difficult to see your own weaknesses, or your own blind spots. Because if you could see your own blind spot, it wouldn't be a blind spot. The mere fact that it's a blind spot means that you can't see it, you need somebody else to point it out. And sometimes it may be such a blind spot that even if the Zen master himself points it out, you can't accept it, you just don't see it.

Gunapala: You have to have faith to accept it (?).

Voices: (indistinct few sentences) (laughter)

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S: Well, sometimes if the blind spot is a really big blind spot you may not even realize that you're being hit on the blind spot. (laughter) You may just think the master is behaving in an odd sort of way that you can't understand, you just don't know what he's getting at.

Murray: Is this where you get your Vimalakirti large shock?

S: Mmm. So this does point to the fact that, at the very least, I mean, insight does arise also within the context of spiritual friendship, especially the sort of exchange between spiritual friends, not simply within the context of meditation. In a sense a meditative element is present in that exchange, in as much as both parties are intensely concentrated on that occasion.

Prasannasiddhi: The thought also occurs that most people don't actually have a Zen master to point out their blind spots for them.

S: Well, very often the blind spots are so obvious, or the faults are so obvious you don't need a Zen master to point them out, almost anybody could point them out, because almost everybody sees them except you! So any spiritual friend will do, in many cases. I mean, even within the context of horizontal spiritual friendship there's quite a lot that can be pointed out, leaving aside vertical spiritual friendship altogether.

Murray: But, er, it seems to me, I mean, is this the right way to look at it, in as much as we're looking at insight arising in terms of your having blocks pointed out, overcoming blocks, but wouldn't it much more tend to be positive? You have whole positive areas pointed out ...

S: Yes, when I spoke of, you know, pointing out weaknesses, well, obviously that applies only on a certain level of spiritual friendship, maybe at quite a low level and at quite an elementary level. But in the case of higher levels of spiritual friendship, you know, especially in the case of what I've called transcendental spiritual friendship, it's not a case, it's not a question of pointing out weaknesses or shortcomings in the ordinary moral sense, or

blindnesses in the ordinary, psychological sense, but pointing out blindnesses in the transcendental sense itself, in as much as you're not seeing reality, you're not seeing things as they are. So your attention and your mind needs to be directed to those things. However positive someone is, or however positive the approach, the basic fact is that there is an imperfection in you, you're still immature. So it cannot be a completely positive process, in a sense. You're having to transcend your limitations all the time, which means your limitations have to be pointed out all the time, if you're not aware of them,

Prasannasiddhi: But also as kind of the other side of the coin, at the same time as you point out limitations, pointing out kind of points that are good and avenues which, you know your friend could pursue.

S: Yes, if your friend doesn't appreciate those points or doesn't appreciate the qualities which he already has. Well then it may be a function of a spiritual friend, you know, whether horizontal or vertical, to encourage the friend by pointing out those things, if he's rather lacking in self confidence or self appreciation and so on.

Prasannasiddhi: Or even a sort of general ... the aspect of rejoicing in merits creates a positive environment which makes it easier when there is something difficult.

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S: Yes, yes, one certainly shouldn't only be concerned with faults and weaknesses, even though they may be undoubtedly there.

All right then, let's go on to the next one. The Buddha says, "Then again, Meghiya, a monk is virtuous, he abides restrained with the restraint of the obligations, he is perfect in the practice of right behaviour, sees danger in trifling faults, he undertakes and trains himself in the ways of training". Let's look at the original terms here. Virtuous is silaba, he observes sila and "he abides restrained with the restraint of the obligations The obligations are the patimokkha. "He sees danger in trifling faults, this is often mentioned, "and he undertakes and trains himself in the ways of training". The "ways of training" if of course the sikkhapadas, as in "veramani sikkhapadam".

Perhaps one should also give some attention to the question of the way in which Kalyana Mitrata sort of merges with sila, do you see what I mean? It's as though there is a sort of natural progression: if Kalyana Mitrata really comes first, and if sila etc. really comes second, there must be a sort of natural association between them, do you see what I mean? So what is the nature of that association, how is it that as a result of Kalyana Mitrata sila develops?

Gunapala: It reminds me a bit of the Path of Transformation after insight, like the Kalyana Mitrata is your sort of insight framework and sila is the transformation of, or the working on that which is gained through Kalyana Mitrata.

S: That is true, though if one puts it in terms of insight perhaps one is going a bit too quickly because insight comes a bit further on. But perhaps it's helpful to sort of recall the situation in the Buddha's day, this makes the connection between the two things clear, the connection between Kalyana Mitrata and sila. I mean, very often what would happen in the Buddha's day, and even afterwards in, you know, traditional Buddhist societies, that someone, say a young man, or even a boy, would see the bhikkhus moving about, or he'd go to visit them at the

vihara. And he'd become friendly with them, in fact he'd become quite drawn to them, do you see what I mean, and start coming under their influence. And in that way, Kalyana Mitrata would develop, spiritual friendship would develop, and he might even want to spend a lot of time with them. Even he might want to go and live with them, even might want to become a bhikkhu himself. But if he wants to do that, if he wants to live with them and be like them, well, he's got to do as they do, he's got to behave as they behave, and they are leading an ethical life. So if he wants to develop his spiritual friendship with them and associate more closely with them, he also has to start leading an ethical life, he has to start living as they live. In fact he will want to do that, I mean, on account of his spiritual friendship, he'll want to do whatever they are doing, do you see what I mean? In that way the spiritual friendship leads into, let's say, ethics. I mean, it's just like on another level, the growing boy, out of affection for or attachment to the father, wanting to do whatever the father does. So you first become devoted to your spiritual friends, while perhaps continuing to lead your own life, but after a while the friendship develops to such an extent that you just want to be like them, to behave like them, to live like them. In that way, the question of behaviour, the question of conduct - your conduct - arises. Or your spiritual friends may advise you, they may point out what is skilful and what is unskilful, in that way also you might start leading a more skilful life, in other words, a more ethical life. You may progress from Kalyana Mitrata to sila.

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Prasannasiddhi: It's like referring to the path in a way, you would sort of progress from Kalyana Mitrata to meditation, or from the start you don't go straight into meditation, you need to sort out your, sort of, groundwork. So it's as if the contact with the friend provides the impetus where you realize there's something more to do, in a sense, and you start off by ... it's as if the first thing is you see that this person is different and that he's, you know, more kind, more sociable.

S: It's like someone might come along to an FWBO. centre and might be just quite drawn, quite attracted just by the friendly atmosphere, the friendly way that the people speak to him. So he'd have a sort of taste of spiritual friendship and he might be going along for a while just for the sake of that. This does sometimes happen. I mean, when I was, you know, taking classes, some time ago, a few people did say eventually that what they'd really come along for to begin with was not in fact the meditation, it was the cup of tea and friendly chat after the meditation; it was that which they enjoyed more, and got more out of. And they had to sit through the meditation in order to get that! (laughter) So actually, though they technically began with meditation, technically they came for meditation, really what they were coming for was the, you could say, spiritual friendship, or even just friendship. So once that is established, well then of course other things will follow. And the first thing that follows is sila, that is to say, well, you start behaving in the same way that the people that you regard as your spiritual friends, or even as your friends. They do certain things, you tend to do certain things; they don't do certain things, you don't do certain things. Well, you stop eating meat, I mean, not particularly because you'd thought deeply about it, but because none of the people with whom you're associating happen to eat meat, so you just don't eat meat either. If you go out with them you know they all won't eat meat, and you don't want to be different from them, perhaps, so you don't eat meat either. You get into a different sort of way of life, just by associating with them. So therefore I say that the ethics sort of grows naturally out of the Kalyana Mitrata.

(End of side one)

Prasannasiddhi: Actually that sounds like a group ...

S: Like a positive group; though it could be an association with just one spiritual friend.

Gunapala: Yes, because you're inspired by that one person, you want to live like they live.

S: Yes, yes.

Gunapala: And, as you said, not necessarily understanding why you should give up meat or why you should live like that, why you shouldn't kill people, and so forth, just because your spiritual friend doesn't.

S: And you also feel, or you realize, that they wouldn't approve of you doing certain things, so you don't want to incur their disapproval. This is where 'hiri' and 'ottappa' come in, you don't want to be blamed by your spiritual friends, so you refrain from doing things that otherwise you might have done.

Gunapala: Do you think that's a natural progression for a mature person?

S: Well, the more mature the person, I mean mature in the ordinary psychological sense, the more they will think about what they are doing. But I think a very young person is quite happy just to go along with what other people are doing, [52] especially people whom he likes, or whom he looks up to. He doesn't bother to think it all out too much for himself. A more mature person obviously will want to do that, might even question, 'Well, why are you doing this, why are you not eating meat? Why not?' He'd want a reason for that, even while maybe he's actually giving up, but he'll still want a reason for giving up.

So it also says here, "a monk is virtuous, he abides restrained with the restraint of the obligations". The obligations are the pratimokka which was, I was going to say originally, but perhaps not quite originally, a sort of list of 'Silas', a list of ethical observances for those who had gone forth, for those who belonged to the bhikkhu sangha.

This raises the question of, as it were, lists of rules. I mean, eventually the pratimokka came to include roughly 150 rules for bhikkhus, many of which are of course no longer observed. But it does seem that as a sort of checklist we need at least a short and quite clear list of things that we definitely do or definitely don't do. And that's why in the FWBO, or rather in the Order, the Western Buddhist Order, we have the 'dasa sila', it's not enough just to say, 'Well, lead a good life and be ethical', you need to be more specific than that. You need to have certain specific principles or guidelines against which you can as it were judge your own behaviour. So these are as it were our pratimokka or pratimoksha one could say. They provide one with a very definite, concrete criterion of behaviour.

Prasannasiddhi: Although in the pratimokka it's 150 rules whereas in the FWBO we have 5 Silas.

S: Well, for Order members there are 10.

Prasannasiddhi: It does seem there's a bit of a difference between ten and 150, it almost sounds as if we're taking it easy!

S: Well, one could say in the Western Buddhist Order there are far more than ten, but actually they haven't yet all been written down. Because rules are written down from the sort of skilful practice of people.

Gunapala: Yes, I think it's been gone into before, it's more describing the way we live. Like if you wrote down all the things ... the way the ideal community, say, or the ideal living situation, for a man, you could probably easily find 150 things with that sort of right ideal.

S: For instance, you could start off - Rule 1 : "Thou shalt not live with women. Rule 2 Thou shalt live with other men". (laughter) You see what I mean?

Gunapala: Yes, you're describing the situation.

S: "Thou shalt not eat meat in the community. Thou shalt not eat fish in the community. A woman shall not be admitted within the walls of the etc. etc." Yes, so you could draw up a whole list of rules which would embody your way of life, but circumstances change, one has to pay attention to principles, rather than rules in the sense of very rigid or very narrow prescriptions as to how one should behave. So that's why I speak very often of the ten Silas as being principles rather than rules.

Murray: I was talking to a monk in Auckland, a bloke called () who spent five years in Thailand with () and he was saying that the Vinaya was like [53] a cage around the mind, like a structure put around the mind, then you could watch the mind react and behave and channel it. I was just wondering if that same principle could be applied to, say, what we do, for example, if, say, you were working in a co-operative, say, in a building team, you're living in a men's community, you're doing meditation, going to community evenings; the principle's the same in as much as you have that structure around you, within which, you know, you can watch yourself or watch the mind.

S: Yes, perhaps, I would say there is truth in that but I think the image of the cage is a little unfortunate in a way; at least it doesn't suggest the whole truth. One might even say it is a negative image, because a cage suggests imprisonment, as though the spiritual life, being a monk, is like being in prison. We don't want to encourage that sort of idea though there is an element of truth in it, it's not the whole truth; you could also say it's like living in a garden and just taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities and picking all the various beautiful blossoms, it's also like that. But it is true, in the sense that a rule or a principle represents a restriction, to that extent the fact that you're observing or trying to observe a number of principles or rules means that you do sometimes find or feel yourself to be in a sort of cage. But if you get that sort of feeling too strongly, even though it is useful to be in that sort of situation to some extent, you may start feeling that the whole spiritual life is something restrictive, rather than something which encourages growth, do you see what I mean? And this, I think, is the mistake that the Theravada, at least in modern times, has made, that, "Oh, you mustn't do this and you mustn't do that", and the monk is hemmed in, you know, by restrictions. Yes, it does give one an opportunity to study the workings and the reactions of one's own mind, but again, one must be careful that one doesn't identify the whole of the spiritual life with that sort of situation, and make the, sort of, image of the cage the image for leading a spiritual life. I know some monks these days do feel that they're living in a cage and sometimes they just try to do things between the bars (laughter) but it doesn't encourage a very healthy mentality in some ways. But, yes, I mean, even living in a men's

community, that itself, well, to some people, it feels like a cage because, why? It means you're in this cage called men's community and it's keeping you away from women. So some people do come up against this, and they can study, therefore, the workings of their own minds under those sort of conditions. But, of course, the men's community is not just a cage, it's also, as I said, like a garden because there are all sorts of wonderful opportunities, things that one can develop.

Gunapala: It's protective as well, this is why it's a bit more like a positive cage in the fact that it's protective ...

S: Yes, it's a castle, it's a stronghold, it's a citadel.

Gunapala: A haven.

S: A haven (laughter).

Prasannasiddhi: A paradise.

S: A paradise, yes. So this is the standard Theravada attitude to all the rules, there is certainly an element of truth in that, and certainly one can study one's own mind and certainly one's mind is sometimes rebellious and is rightly checked and rightly controlled by the observance of these rules or principles. But one can't reduce the spiritual life simply to that.

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Prasannasiddhi: You get a feeling from the 150 rules of a hard, crusty, flaky sort of feeling of the spiritual life, rather than something that's soft and supple and has got some life to it.

S: And also, you know, something which is, well I was going to say psychologically important but it's very important spiritually too; I think it is important that whatever one undertakes to observe, as it were officially, one really does observe, that one doesn't sort of take anything, one doesn't undertake to observe anything as it were with one's tongue in one's cheek, knowing that one is not going to be making a serious effort to observe it. And that's what happens if you have too many rules; they're not taken seriously and that has a very undermining effect on the spiritual life. That you're saying that I undertake to do this and I undertake to do that, but your heart isn't really in it, you're not making 100% effort to observe all those things as you should be. So better to have a small number of precepts or principles that you're really trying to observe and from which you're definitely not going to deviate rather than have a quite long list which might look rather impressive but which you're not really seriously trying to observe or which you're just trying to get round, as so often happens, you know, in the East.

Silaratna: Is this what the Buddha was pointing to in the Maha Parinibbana Sutta when he said, "after my death you may abolish the minor rules if you so choose"?

S: Well, whatever the minor rules were and opinion differs about that, it's clear that the Buddha regarded some rules as so unimportant that if the monks wanted they could have just abolished them after his death.

Khemapala: They weren't too clear which were the minor rules though ...

S: Well, I think it is pretty clear if one uses one's common sense, but they preferred, it would seem, according to one account at least, not to do that, and out of respect, perhaps excessive respect for the Buddha, they decided to leave things exactly as they were. And the excuse, as it were, was that Ananda had not ventured to enquire which were the minor rules, though it should have been, one would have thought, not all that difficult to distinguish.

Prasannasiddhi: Actually you don't know how many minor rules there were at the time of Buddha's life, perhaps, like the 150, perhaps a lot of them came in the centuries after the Buddha's life.

S: It does seem that the list of 150 is pretty ancient; it may well have been in existence towards the end of the Buddha's life, we can't be sure, because the term 'pratimoksha' is used in apparently several different senses. It may not originally have applied at all to the list of 150 rules. It may have referred to simply some very broad, general principles. I mean, for instance, verses like the "cease to do evil, learn to do good", and so on, these are referred to as a pratimoksha; they're sort of just general ethical verses or verses of sort of general ethical exhortation, not representing a sort of code at all.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you know a good translation for the word 'pratimoksha', is it the word 'obligations'?

S: Well the word 'pratimoksha' is a quite difficult word. The literal meaning is quite clear - it really means 'release', pratimoksha, 'release from', but, you know, why that particular term should be used for a particular list of rules as we have it now, or even for, you know, certain verses of [55] ethical exhortation, no one seems able to explain. But literally, it means, you know, 'release from', 'that which releases from'.

Gunapala: It's obvious then, isn't it, why it should be 'release from', surely it's release from a tangled ...

S: No, it isn't really so simple as that.

Gunapala: It isn't as simple as that?

Prasannasiddhi: Or 'that which releases', could you say?

S: Well, for instance there is the expression 'recite the pratimoksha'. (pause)

Prasannasiddhi: It could be the pratimoksha could be 'that which releases'.

S: Well, all sorts of explanations are possible or have been suggested but there's none which is as it were completely convincing or even explains properly. I mean, why that particular term is used. So it would seem that there was even some uncertainty as to what 'pratimoksha' actually is; it is suggested it doesn't necessarily consist in this list of rules of conduct for the bhikkhus. (pause)

Anyway, it's clear that ethics, in the sense of skilful conduct comes next, ethics grows out of Kalyana Mitrata. It's the second thing that conduces to the maturity of the heart's release.

All right, someone like to read that next paragraph?

Prasannasiddhi: (reads)

"Then again, Meghiya, as regards talk that is serious and suitable for opening up the heart and conduces to downright revulsion, to dispassion, to ending, to calm, to comprehension, to perfect insight, to Nibbana, that is to say, - talk about wanting little, about contentment, about solitude, about avoiding society, about putting forth energy; talk about virtue, concentration of mind and wisdom, talk about release, knowledge and insight of release, - such talk as this the monk gets at pleasure without gain and without stint. When the heart's release is immature, Meghiya, this is the third thing that conduces to its maturity."

S: So discussion comes next. Discussion is the third thing that conduces to the maturity of the heart which is not yet released. That's quite interesting because usually we get sila, samadhi, prajna; but on this occasion we get a rather different series, we get spiritual friendship, ethics, and now we get discussion before coming on to, in effect, meditation. So why do you think this is? Or, one might say, well, how is it that talk "that is serious and suitable" etc. arises out of the observance of ethics? Well, some hint of this has in fact already been given; inasmuch as one might start enquiring, well, why do you behave in this way rather than that.

Gunapala: Maturity has started to move, you're less immature now, your maturity has started to develop.

S: Yes. Because, as I've mentioned, you can be drawn to certain people, [56] drawn to a certain spiritual friend, you develop a spiritual friendship and because of that spiritual friendship you start behaving like them, simply because you're associating with them, but this is all rather, so to speak, on the group level. You're just in a way imitating. But after a while you want to know, you want to understand the reasons for doing certain things. You want to understand the reason for being ethical - why lead a good life? Just that your spiritual friends are leading a good life isn't sufficient, just that other people are leading a good life, the group perhaps is leading a good life, isn't sufficient. You want to know 'why should I lead a good life?' And in order to explain that one has to bring in the whole philosophy, so to speak, of individual development, one has to speak about the spiritual life itself as something which is lived, consciously and deliberately, by the individual who wishes to develop. One has to explain why, in a sense, one should wish to develop, or bring out the fact that in fact everyone does wish to develop. And in that way all these other things come in. This is what the Buddha is getting at when he speaks of talk that is "serious and suitable for opening up the heart and conduces to downright revulsion or disentanglement, to dispassion, to ending" etc. "talk about wanting little, about contentment, about solitude, about avoiding society." This is all talk about the spiritual life and about why one should lead a spiritual life.

Gunapala: These must have been the main sort of topics of discussion in the Buddha's day.

S: Yes. And it isn't, of course, just talking about them, it's inciting one another actually to practise them.

Gunapala: And of course to understand why.

S: Yes. Understand as it were the rationale of the spiritual life.

Gunapala: Why avoid the society.

S: Yes. Why live in a men's community? I mean someone might just move in to a men's community because his spiritual friends are living there, without understanding, you know, what I've called the rationale of it at all, or the philosophy of it at all. But after a while it may sort of dawn, 'Well, why are we living in this way? It's a good way of life, but why? Why is it good? Why is it better than the way other people are living or seem to be living?' And then you start gradually, you know, entering into the principle of the thing. You not only benefit from your particular way of life, you know, living in a men's community, but you understand why you are benefiting, you understand how it works, and how it's good that it should work in that way.

Prasannasiddhi: Could you say that study comes into this?

S: Well, yes, one could say study is included in this area, especially study at the mitra level. You see, a mitra has joined, in a sense, he's joined the positive group, he's even got his eye on the spiritual community, perhaps, but he still is asking why, he hasn't sort of thrown in his lot completely, he hasn't gone for refuge, though he may be thinking about it or might have even asked. He's still asking why, so in his case, you know, study, among other things, means lifting him from the level of just conforming, because he likes you, to the level of understanding, because he realizes what is good for his own development as a human being, because he understands the whole philosophy of individual development.

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Prasannasiddhi: So in a way he's still doing the same things as his spiritual friends; in a way he's now doing them almost independently.

S: Yes, he does them at least partly as a result of his own understanding of why it is good to do those things. He's not just doing them because his spiritual friends are doing them, huh? I mean, maybe his actions are exactly the same as before, but they're illumined more by understanding than they were before.

Murray: So a member of the spiritual community would carry on acting that way even if he was the only one doing it.

S: I don't quite see the connection.

Murray: I was just thinking that one of the criteria of someone who has Gone for Refuge or a member of the spiritual community is that he would do it by himself regardless (of what others did).

S: Yes, yes that is true. And of course if he was the only one in the spiritual community acting in that way it wouldn't be much of a spiritual community! But yes, the fact is that, you know, one of the signs that one is ready to Go to Refuge is that one is prepared to go it alone, huh? If you're entirely dependent on the support of the group, or haven't even given thought to the question of whether you should go it alone, then clearly you're not ready. So one of the functions of, say, study and discussion, as regards mitras, is, you know, to inculcate an understanding of the, again what I've called, the rationale of the spiritual life, so that they understand why one does certain things, because it's only when they've understood why one

does certain things, that they can want as individuals, or decide as individuals, that they will do those things, because of their understanding, rather than just because they're doing those things because those are the things their spiritual friends are doing.

Gunapala: I can relate to what you said about study being part of this, you know, the fact that study is so enjoyable, you know, the Buddha says that "without pain and without stint," there's something to really look forward to, discussing things, like energy, virtue, concentration, all these things, talking about them, discussing it, is enjoyable.

S: The more you talk about them the more you feel like practising them. (laughter). And also you notice the Buddha does say "such talk as this the monk gets as pleasure", nikkhamalabhi.

Gunapala: It's part of their life.

S: Yes, yes, it's always available, it's there all the time; there are all these sorts of things to talk about.

Prasannasiddhi: "He gets at pleasure" means it's on tap.

S: It's on tap, yes.

Prasannasiddhi: It doesn't mean that actually he gets it enjoyably, that he actually enjoys it ...

S: Well there is that suggestion, yes.

Gunapala: "Without pain ..."

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S: Yes, "without pain and without stint", yes, not just sort of measured out, sort of two hours every Friday afternoon.

Prasannasiddhi: It's also interesting that what the actual talk, what it consists in, "about wanting little contentment, solitude, avoiding society, putting forth energy" it sort of recapitulates the whole, it's as if the whole framework of the spiritual life is gone into.

S: Yes, essentially it is just talk about the spiritual life itself, talk about the individual, talk about spiritual development.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you know what the word 'stint' ... ?

S: "Without stint", it's a good old-fashioned English word. (consults dictionary) I can't see () (pause). The dictionary doesn't give it. There's quite a few words this dictionary doesn't in fact give.

Prasannasiddhi: So the word was ...

S: (Arcosilalabi) labi means simply 'gain'.

Prasannasiddhi: Are those two words?

S: It's one word. (pause) Wait a minute, I'll find out; that's the negative form, I'll see if I can find the positive form ... (pause) Kasi is cultivation or tilling ... no, it doesn't help us unfortunately. There may be some connection there, of course.

Prasannasiddhi: "Without hard work", it may be.

S: Hm, yes. Without stint means without limit, without anything being held back. Let me look up the other term, the one that is translated 'pain'. (pause) Yes, "without duty", hence, presumably, "without pain". (pause) "Such talk is always easily available". So this is the third thing that conduces to its maturity, the heart's maturity.

You notice that right at the beginning the Buddha says, "talk that is serious and suitable for opening up the heart," huh? That expresses the matter very well: it must be real communication, the talk must be within the context of real communication.

Prasannasiddhi: That's interesting... (pause)

S: Yes, ("Cetovivaraṇa"), you could say "opening up the heart" or "uncovering the heart, or uncovering the mind", it has all those suggestions.

Prasannasiddhi: It's interesting, several people have said that when they've been on seminars with you, that they've actually felt that the study's actually been painful in the sense that it was almost (was) kind of opening up their heart, perhaps this was a little bit painful.

S: Yes, I get quite a few letters after study retreats, especially from the women, I don't know why, they seem to be a bit more impressionable than the men, but quite a few people seem to have definite experiences after, you know, a study retreat, especially when, you know, something which deeply concerns them has been touched upon. I mean, sometimes it happens even in the context of the retreat itself. I mean, for instance, I remember there was one slightly dramatic example where, taking the women for study or taking a group of women [59] for study, the talk turned upon abortion, and one of the women present actually burst into tears on the spot and had to leave the room, and it did afterwards transpire, as I was afterwards informed, that she had had an abortion some years previously and all the feelings, you know, in connection with that came up, so to speak, when the topic was mentioned and discussed, and gone into, because we went into it quite thoroughly. So that's a pretty obvious sort of example. But it happens in other sorts of ways and often there's a sort of delayed reaction, because, yes, people's hearts are opened up, the discussion opens up their hearts, and I think this happens in connection with well almost any study retreat or study group. One may not always realize how close to the bone one is getting with certain people because they've got their own thoughts and their own background and their own past experiences - you may not always know, but, you know, there are all sorts of effects, all sorts of repercussions and reverberations, you know, going on.

Murray: What is that Pali term for opening up the heart?

S: It's (cettovivaraṇa?) 'Vivaraṇa' is uncovering. (pause).

Murray: So you essentially, you deepen your human contact, your understanding of life.

S: You deepen your human contact, I mean, via discussion of the Dharma, via discussion of the spiritual life.

Prasannasiddhi: Deepen your human contact via discussion of the Dharma.

S: Yes. I'm emphasizing via discussion of the Dharma. I mean, Murray said you deepen your human contact, so I'm saying, yes, you do deepen it, but you deepen it via your discussion of the Dharma, you know, the context is definitely a spiritual context. It's not simply that you deepen your human contact, because you deepen it via the Dharma. The human contact itself, or your experience as an individual itself, assumes a Dharmic dimension.

Prasannasiddhi: I would have thought "deepen your human experience!" might perhaps be ... (indistinct).

S: There's quite a lot that, of course, we could say about all of these different topics but really we've no time for that. We could say quite a lot about revulsion, dispassion, perfect insight, solitude, avoiding society, etc. But many of these have been gone into on other occasions. (pause).

So let's go on to the fourth of these (?). Someone like to read that paragraph?

Gunapala: (reads)

"Then again, Meghiya, a monk abides resolute in energy, for the abandoning of unprofitable things, for the acquiring of profitable things he is stout and strong in effort, not laying aside the burden in things profitable. When the heart's release is immature, Meghiya, this is the fourth thing that conduces to its maturity.

S: "Resolute in energy"; it's more often translated as "of aroused energy", but perhaps it amounts to much the same thing. "For the abandoning of unprofitable things", here it says "unskilful mental states", "Akusala Dharmas", Paha nayakusala and for the acquiring of skilful - what this translator has translated as profitable is what we usually translate as [60] "skilful" or even "wholesome". That is to say 'Kusala'.

So what does this really refer to, what sort of energy is this? In what does this abandoning of the unskilful and the acquiring of skilful things really consist? On what level does it take place?

Murray: It's the development of positive emotional mental states and the curbing of negative ones.

S: So what does that amount to, what do we usually call that in one word?

Murray: Growth.

S: Well, meditation. This is what meditation essentially is, so really, meditation comes in here. I mean, it's energy but it's energy in the eradication of unskilful mental states and the development of skilful mental states, and that is essentially what meditation is. So really, the Buddha here is referring to meditation.

Silaratna: It seems like it's sort of the individual expression of the last three things: suddenly you put forth your energy as an individual in your meditation.

S: Indeed, yes. One might say, well why doesn't the Buddha, you know, speak of meditation, specifically speak of samadhi, or speak of dhyana, huh? Well he's speaking about what meditation essentially consists in, and dissociating it from the specifically, from the, as it were, meditative context. May be that's a hint to Meghiya; I mean, he was thinking in terms of going off and meditating, you know, in a mango-grove: the Buddha is actually saying the important thing, whether you meditate in a mango-grove or not, or sit in a mango-grove or not, is to get rid of unskilful mental states and develop skilful mental states; that is the essence of meditation. I mean, I've said myself before that meditation consists in the uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states. So forget about sitting, you know, forget about mango-groves, forget about shrine-rooms, forget about particular postures; the essence of meditation consists in maintaining an uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states.

Murray: But the danger is that for someone who has an uninterrupted flow of unskilful mental states that you would need a lot of formal sitting.

S: Oh yes, you would need to make ... er, I wouldn't say just a lot of formal sitting, you'd need to make an effort all the time, and one way of making that effort would be, you know, to spend a lot of time actually sitting, and meditating. Because you still have to do the first part of the job, to get rid of the unskilful mental states.

Prasannasiddhi: So does this imply that what happens in meditation you can also do in other ways?

S: In other ways, at least to some extent. No doubt meditation is the more direct way, or more obvious way, but it doesn't mean that you can only meditate when you're in the shrine-room. I think one should beware of that sort of mentality that, well, you're trying to get rid of unskilful thoughts and develop skilful thoughts, or mental states, when you're in the shrine-room but as soon as you step outside the shrine-room, well, it doesn't really matter much what you do. The effort must be kept up all the time; it's simply that in the shrine-room you're making the effort in a more concentrated [61] and one-pointed sort of way. I mean, sessions in the shrine-room are certainly necessary, but the effort is not to be confined to the shrine-room, that sort of effort,

Murray: In regard to this, what do you think about continuous repetition of a mantra, er, for example, a work situation.

S: Well that clearly helps, I mean, that is why that sort of practice is recommended, assuming, you know, one isn't obliged to do it in too schizophrenic a fashion. Sometimes it may be you need to put your mind fully on the job you are doing, if it's a rather difficult piece of work, you must put your mind on it fully otherwise you won't be able to do it properly.

Murray: It's just that one of the senior order members in a study group years ago in the LBC said he didn't think it was that good an idea because if you were using continuous repetition of a mantra, particularly if it wasn't the one of your practice, when you finally got a practice it would have a sort of undermining effect on the way you related to the mantra when you were actually given it, in conjunction with the practice

END OF TAPE

S: (lost at beginning of tape) ... to take up, you know, the repetition of the mantra, partly for that reason, partly for others, because, partly, we don't give mitras visualization practices, you get those when you're ordained. So there is something in that. But on the other hand occasionally one has given mitras some mantra recitation practices if it seemed appropriate; there's no absolutely hard and fast rule.

Murray: So the criterion would be if you actually had a feel for the mantra, if it sort of inculcated a feel for skilful states?

S: Well it's difficult to say because I would say if one was really sort of ready for that, then in a sense one was ready for ordination. It's quite difficult sometimes to know just where to stop. I mean, you don't want to hold back enthusiastic people, on the other hand you don't want them rushing or plunging into things that they're not ready for. Sometimes it's quite difficult to know whether you're doing the one or the other. But on the whole we try to go by the path of regular steps, sometimes though it seems we're obliged to deviate from it into the path of rather irregular steps.

But you appreciate the distinction that I'm making: sitting and meditating is certainly important, but the principle that you are then applying, you know, when you are sitting and meditating, you can't apply in other ways, at other times. So that there should, ideally, in one form or another, be an uninterrupted effort to get rid of unskilful mental states and develop skilful mental states, and it's this that the Buddha is speaking about at this point. I mean meditation is, one might say, only the most specific form of doing this, so in a sense, the Buddha is talking about meditation.

Gunapala: There's one part, in the centre of it, where he says, "not laying aside the burden of things profitable"; I mean it almost sounded to me as if he was directing that specifically towards Meghiya; I mean, he did lay down the burden, he felt it a burden that he had to serve the Buddha, wait on the Buddha all the time.

S: Well, everyone could paraphrase 'burden' as 'responsibility'; not giving up one's responsibility with regard to skilful things, not giving up one's responsibility of eliminating the unskilful mental states, and developing, cultivating the skilful ones. It's because you have energy that you don't [62] give up the responsibility that you have to, in a word, evolve.

Prasannasiddhi: "Not laying aside the burden"; this almost conjures the feeling of losing your mindfulness in a way, you know, you just get carried away with the external situation, and before you know it you've lost it. (pause)

S: All right, let's go on to the fifth thing.

Murray: (reads)

"Then again, Meghiya, a monk is possessed of insight, endowed with the insight that goes on to discern the rise and fall, with the Aryan penetration which goes on to penetrate the perfect ending of Ill. When the heart's release is immature, Meghiya, this is the fifth thing, and these are the five things that conduce to its maturity."

S: Hm. Insight here is "panna", "prajna". So, "Then again, Meghiya, a monk is possessed of insight".

Ah, but before we go on to that we didn't discuss, did we, how energy arises out of, so to speak, discussion. We didn't discuss that; let's go back to that for a minute. Well, in a way the connection is obvious: you're talking about something, you get very enthusiastic about something - in the end you want to do it. I mean, before you know where you are you start actually doing that thing, putting it into practice, putting it into operation. Your enthusiasm, generated by talking about that thing reaches such a pitch that it can't be contained by talking, it has to express itself in action.

I mean, for instance, in the course of discussion the topic of a particular poet may come up and one or two people get really enthusiastic about his poetry, talking about his poetry, may be reciting bits and pieces and you also become quite interested and quite enthusiastic though you've never read that poet before. But you end up with a feeling that you want to go and get his collected works straight away and start reading them. That's what happens.

Murray: So it's actually quite important to choose your friends in that case, because certain people talk about certain things.

S: Yes.

Murray: And, you know, to the extent that you're not an individual you're open to persuasion.

S: Yes, you're open to influence, very much so. We've noticed, within the movement, if certain people start reading a particular book and talking a lot about it, quite a number of other people are sure to want to read that book and actually read it. So you get sort of waves going around the movement: a wave of Shelley or a wave of Keats or a wave of Jung or a wave of somebody else. In the very early days of the FWBO there was a wave of (?) I think.

All right, let's then go back to insight, prajna. The Buddha says, "Then again, Meghiya, a monk is possessed of insight, endowed with the insight which goes on to discern the rise and fall", and the note here says "(Pali word?), birth and death, beginning and end." To perceive the rise and fall of things, huh? To perceive the way in which things come into existence and the way in which they pass out of existence. This is, in effect, the perception of [63] transitoriness or impermanence. It is this which one sees when one's Dharma eye opens, as I explained recently in a lecture.

Murray: What does note 3 mean - Pannava?

S: Pannava means possessed of insight. "Prajna" or "panna" is insight and pannava means possessed of insight.

Murray: And the footnote here says, "as the working of the self in man."

S: I'm afraid that's Mrs Rhys Davids own view (" "?) refers to one of her books where she speaks about prajna in the sense as the working of the, as it were, unpanishadic Self - with a capital 'S' - in man This is, of course, a non-orthodox interpretation of her own. (pause) So it's interesting in view of what I said in that lecture, you may remember, that the Buddha speaks

here of insight or prajna simply in terms of the rise and fall of things, i.e. into their conditionality and their impermanence. (pause) But one shouldn't take impermanence as it were negatively, because the fact is there are two kinds of impermanence: one might speak of the cyclical impermanence and the creative impermanence. Cyclical impermanence is where something, you know, arises and then ceases and then is, as it were, replaced by something of an opposite nature. Whereas the creative impermanence is where something arises and then ceases and then is as it were replaced, or not replaced but reinforced by something which is even more of the same nature, even more positive, even more creative. But the principle of impermanence still holds good, the principle of dependent origination, conditioned co-production, pratitya samutpada still holds good, huh?

Murray: Could you give us a concrete example of those two types of impermanence?

S: Well, one is the round of existence itself, the other is the spiral. I mean everything on the round is of the first kind of impermanence and everything on the spiral is of the second kind of impermanence.

Prasannasiddhi: With the spiral or the creative, could you say that that refers to after insight has arisen in the sense of after the point of no return had been reached?

S: Not entirely because, I've said before, the spiral is divided into two sections; only the latter section, the section on the other side of the point of no return is the spiral proper, that is to say, which is irreversibly spiral. But the section which lies on this side of the point of no return is, so to speak, "reversibly spiral":- the energies there can regress into the round. That section of the spiral, the section which is this side of the point of no return, corresponds roughly to the dhyana states, from which one can develop insight but also from which one can fall back into very unskilful mental states.

Prasannasiddhi: So in your meditation practice or in your spiritual life you're going up the spiral, but, the thing is, you might actually go down the spiral as well, whereas once you get past the point of no return, you just keep going.

S: Right, yes. But how do you think that insight arises as a result of energy, especially energy put forth in the practice of what we call meditation?

Murray: Well, the basis of insight is dhyana.

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S: It's concentration, yes, you get your energy, as it were, from there, the energy which is concentrated in the meditative experience is put into the understanding of things.

Prasannasiddhi: I sort of wonder how a person, striving on his own, say, in his meditation practice could sort of go that far up the spiral and reach a point where he keeps going, because if he's just sort of meditating ...

S: Yes, because the Buddhist tradition is that it's very difficult to break through on one's own, because what does one do? One doesn't know what to do, one can perhaps get quite far up the spiral in some sort of dhyana experience but what does one do next, one's got no clue. So unless one has got as it were some outside guidance, except under very exceptional

circumstances, one just stays there, or one just goes up and down, up and down: one doesn't break through into the Transcendental plane or Transcendental dimension. One doesn't actually develop insight. It's as though one has need to know how to do it; how to develop insight on the basis of the meditative experience. And that's where one's contact with the Dharma comes in, that's where teaching comes in, that's where teaching is of importance. Because in terms of the Buddha's biography, that represents him as experiencing not only the 'rupa' dhyanas but the 'arupa' dhyanas, you know, when he was studying with his early teachers, but they weren't able to carry him any further than that. But by a tremendous individual effort, realizing that there was something beyond, he broke through. So thereafter he was able to point out to others that there was something beyond, something to break through to. Before, that was not known. So unless one, as it were, hears about it, directly or indirectly, from someone who has broken through, it's very difficult to know how to go about things. You might even reach that point of intense meditative concentration but you won't know how to proceed after that. It's not something that you necessarily see at that particular point.

Murray: Do you think, then, that it's possible to break through in any other religion apart from Buddhism?

S: Well, it's difficult enough in the case of Buddhism, with all that outside help, but in the case of other religions without that outside help at all, I'd say it was very, very difficult. I mean, the odd mystic might have had a distant glimpse, one doesn't want to limit the possibilities of human nature; but also one needs to see some signs, some evidence, that that has actually taken place, and one doesn't really see much. So I would say one can't exclude absolutely the possibility of, you know, of mystics especially in other spiritual traditions actually breaking through and having a glimpse of the transcendental, one can't exclude that, but it does seem to be rather unlikely.

Silaratna: Energy also seems to point to insight in terms of repetitious determination, you know, insight is only developed through repetition and you repeatedly reflect on impermanence.

S: Yes, yes. You must know what to reflect on, I mean, other experienced people have to tell you, well this is what you need to reflect upon, this is what you've got to really get inside your mind, this is what you've got to dwell upon, this is the point where you'll break through, reflecting in this way on this particular matter.

Prasannasiddhi: One also gets the feeling - it's as if the spiral goes up like that but it almost seems as if the dhyana path of the spiral is sort of one thing but then actually the insight has got something else, it's to do [65] with something completely different which may not even include actually being in a dhyana state.

S: Yes, one has to beware of taking the diagram, the graph, too literally, because if you think in terms of a spiral, which is really quite a good way of thinking, it does suggest that you just carry straight on, as it were, but really it's more like you come to a certain point and then you come right up against a brick wall. I mean, sometimes the Zen people speak in these terms. You just come up against a brick wall; you just don't see how to go further, you don't see any way round the brick wall, the brick wall seems to extend in all directions infinitely, and there's something else on the other side, but how you are to get to it, you just don't know. You

suspect there's something on the other side, you don't really know, you just reason by way of analogy that there usually is something else on the other side of a brick wall, so it feels like a brick wall, so may be there's something else on the other side (laughter). But it's not that you come to this sort of point of no return and you actually see where the spiral continues on the other side: no, it's more like you come up to a brick wall and don't know which way to go. And you have to be actually shown, though even the showing is not easy, for obvious reasons.

Prasannasiddhi: So it's almost like you've got to move into a new dimension where the brick wall no longer exists and so the issue no longer ... it's a bit like the Zen thing like having some bird in a bottle and it can't get out; you've got to transcend the level on which you're operating.

S: Or to put it in another way and still use the same metaphor you could say here you are confronted by a brick wall, or just by this wall, it's completely flat, completely smooth and is exactly the same all over, but someone comes to you and says, "And you just start beating there, that's the weak spot, that's where you can break through." So, out of faith, as it were, you just start beating on that particular spot which perhaps you never would have thought of beating on; but, well, you're told to beat on that spot, so that's the spot you beat on and eventually you do break through. The spot you beat on is this fact or this idea of impermanence.

Prasannasiddhi: And then perhaps you could say then that practising meditation in terms of the dhyanas doesn't really apply any more, because you've broken through into a new ...

S: In a sense it doesn't, though one has to be careful how one puts this, but in a sense, it doesn't. Or one might say that now there is a tendency for the dhyanic state to be a natural one for you, circumstances permitting.

Prasannasiddhi: And your perception of whatever lies beyond is not necessarily dependent in terms of actual practice of dhyana in terms of higher states, it's something quite different.

S: The insight arises, no doubt, in dependence, or at least partially in dependence on dhyana experience, but it cannot be explained or interpreted entirely in terms of dhyana experience. It isn't just an extension of dhyana experience or a refinement of dhyana experience - it is something quite different, there is a sort of break, even a break in the spiral. It's as though, well, that point of no return just coincides with the edge of the wall. Maybe the spiral continues in a sense on the other side, but at that point, with the wall in front of you, you can't see. Anyway, perhaps we'd better end on that note for a few minutes.

(TEA BREAK)

[66]

S: Anyway, would someone like to read that next paragraph?

Silaratna: (reads)

"Now, Meghiya, this may be looked for by a monk who has a lovely intimacy, a lovely friendship, a lovely comradeship, - that he will become virtuous, will abide restrained by the restraint of the obligations, be perfect in the practice of right behaviour, see danger in trifling

faults, undertake and train himself in the ways of training. This, Meghiya, may be looked for by a monk ... that he will become virtuous ... that he will undertake ... the ways of training, that he will get at pleasure, without pain and without stint, such talk as is serious ... about concentration of mind ... insight of release. This, Meghiya, may be looked for ... that he will abide resolute in energy ... not laying aside the burden in things profitable. This Meghiya, may be looked for ... that he will be possessed of insight ... to penetrate to the perfect ending of Ill".

S: In other words, everything follows on from spiritual friendship, everything develops out of, you know, spiritual friendship. So in abandoning, in effect, spiritual friendship, Meghiya has abandoned everything; he's abandoned the spiritual life. So in a sense it isn't at all surprising that he's been assailed by, you know, the kind of thoughts by which he was assailed. He's sort of sawn off the very branch of the tree on which he was actually sitting, so no wonder he's come down with a crash.

So this is why we say, because we've found in the 'Friends', that if someone gets out of contact, well, that is about the worst thing that could happen, I mean out of personal contact. If anyone gets out of personal contact, certainly any Friend or mitra, maybe even, in a few cases I'm sorry to say, even any Order Member, sooner or later, we lose them, we have found that. The contact, that is to say the spiritual friendship, is so important. It's not just a sort of little extra; in a way it's the main thing. So if you're not experiencing that, you're experiencing in fact very little.

Murray: Yes, most people who move out of contact generally don't take up contact anywhere else, it's usually just they slide out.

S: They're just absorbed back into the group, back into ordinary worldly life, this is what usually happens, or what has happened in the past. I don't think, if my memory serves me rightly, that, say, in the case of Order Members, we've ever lost an Order Member to another spiritual group. Whatever Order Members we've lost, and we have lost quite a few in the early days, we've lost to ordinary, worldly life, usually via marriage, the boyfriend, the girlfriend etc. etc. Or for some reason or other spiritual friendship has failed or they've felt let down by spiritual friends or perhaps they didn't even have them, didn't really develop spiritual friendship within the Order. Because in the very early days not as much stress was placed on this as is placed now, we place more stress on it now because we've learned through experience its importance.

Prasannasiddhi: It strikes me that with regard to this thing about everything proceeding from spiritual friendship, that you would have to define that further by saying spiritual friendship with someone who actually had developed insight, rather than just spiritual friendship in general, if you wanted to go all the way up, it would have actually to be with someone who had developed insight.

Murray: But the problem, of course, is that until you develop insight, you've [67] really got no way of knowing who has developed insight.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes.

S: You have to go step by step and usually you're attracted by certain people, by certain

spiritual friends without understanding what exactly it is that attracts you, you just feel that you like them, you like to see them, you like to spend more time in their company. And for you, for the time being, that suffices. And then, perhaps, later on you start wondering what it is that makes them tick, what makes them so positive, what makes them so happy; how is it that they are always able to see things in a way that you're not able to see them, how is it that their advice is usually good, whereas the advice that you give yourself, so to speak, isn't so good. Perhaps you start suspecting that they've got something that you haven't got, or at least that they're in connection, they're in contact with something that you're not, except through them.

Gunapala: I could see the importance of it being a stream entrant, that would be great, if you had that, but the fact of having Kalyana Mitrata with someone who is living the spiritual life, who is also studying, meditating and practising with you, you know, their concern, their energy was concerned and going in that direction, then I think that would be ... that would seem to be what we had the most of. I mean, yes, right, I'm not going against the ideal relationship ...

S: The mere fact that the Movement, so to speak, is a Buddhist movement means, well, it's in contact with the Buddha, if not directly at least indirectly, do you see what I mean? I mean, the fewer, so to speak, veils there are between you and the Buddha the better; but even if there are twenty veils, well, there is still the Buddha, so to speak, on the other side of the twentieth veil and you are in contact with the Buddha through those twenty veils. Something of the Buddha sort of percolates through.

Gunapala: I often feel that studying what we did today, studying what the Buddha is saying to Meghiya, just the fact that we're in contact with what the Buddha is teaching.

S: Yes, yes. I mean, there is some record of it, it has been preserved to some extent in the Dharma and, you know, in the scriptures themselves.

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps you could say that you could have friendship with people who don't have spiritual insight, you have spiritual friendship with people who don't have spiritual insight, but it may or may not conduce to, er, or it may take you sort of, only so far.

S: Yes, you may have to be handed on, so to speak, from one spiritual friend to another.

Prasannasiddhi: It's a bit like the Buddha, he had spiritual friendships before he gained Enlightenment.

S: Yes, they were quite successful ones.

Prasannasiddhi: But they weren't actually ...

S: They couldn't carry him all the way, he had to leave. But we get much the same sort of thing in the case of someone who starts going along to a Centre, perhaps just a very small Centre, and, yes, it certainly is a Centre, [68] a Centre of the FWBO, genuinely so, but it isn't, as it were, big enough to provide him with everything he needs. So he has to move on to some other Centre, some other community perhaps, which can give him more.

Prasannasiddhi: The thing might be that within the Buddhist tradition if there was no kind of enlightened individuals, you'd eventually reach the point where you had to go further, and you'd have to do it all yourself. Whereas within the Buddhist tradition there's actually, er, you know, if you stay within the tradition, and presumably it is a living tradition, then if you keep going ...

S: (interrupting) Sooner or later you come into contact with someone who can carry you a bit further. (pause) Anyway, that's brought out quite well in this particular paragraph, the way in which everything does grow out of spiritual friendship. That, in a way, seems to be the end of the Sutta, in a way, but there is another paragraph and then a verse, but it seems to me that the next paragraph might possibly, I only say might possibly, have been added on, because it does seem to have been an addition. But, I mean, on the other hand a Sutta isn't necessarily a sort of beautifully proportioned whole, you know, in a literary sort of way. So it could be that the Buddha did speak this. On the other hand, it may have been that later compilers of these texts, as they afterwards became, thought that that was a suitable place in which to put this particular teaching which may or may not have originated with the Buddha. So anyway, let's just see; would someone like to read it through? It is quite interesting in its own right anyway.

Prasannasiddhi: (reads)

"Moreover, Meghiya, by the monk who is established in these five conditions, four other things are to be made to grow, thus: The (idea of the) unlovely is to be made to grow for the abandoning of lust; amity is to be made to grow for the abandoning of malice; mindfulness of in breathing and out breathing is to be made to grow for the suppression of discursive thought; the consciousness of impermanence is to be made to grow for the uprooting of the pride of egoism. In him, Meghiya, who is conscious of impermanence the consciousness of what is not the self is established. He who is conscious of what is not the self wins the uprooting of the pride of egoism in this very life, namely, he wins Nibbana."

S: So one might have thought that if the monk has already developed insight, well, there's not much else that he needs to do. That's why the five conditions seem to be complete in themselves and don't seem to require anything more, but nonetheless the Buddha does go on, according to this Sutta, to speak in terms of four other things that are to be made to grow. You could think of these as four different kinds of meditation, and perhaps if the Buddha himself did actually add these things here it was to underline the point that you have got to pay special attention perhaps to this whole question of effort, and getting rid of unskilful mental states and developing skilful ones. And so he gives, so to speak, four different ways of doing that. Though the fourth one is actually a form of insight meditation, as we shall see. So it's as though, if this is an addition by the Buddha himself, He sort of backtracks to virya. You know about the classification of the five basic meditations, corresponding to the five poisons, each particular meditation being an antidote for the five poisons, well we seem to have a sort of early form, a simpler form of that classification here. A four-fold [69] rather than a five-fold classification, because there is lust or craving, there's malice or hatred, there's discursive thought and there's egotism, which are definitely four things to be got rid of and there are four, as it were, meditative or meditation-type antidotes provided by the Buddha.

Murray: What's the fifth one of the five things?

S: The fifth one was ignorance, wasn't it. And the antidote there was the recollection of the

Nidana Chain. So in order to get rid of craving one develops the idea or thought of "asubha". I have gone into this recently, it might have been on one of the Tuscanys; the Sort of standard Theravada form of the practice is with regard, say, to sexual attraction and, you know, you consider the ugly and repulsive aspect of the human physical body, so as to give rise to a feeling of revulsion in yourself so that your natural sort of craving for contact with it will be resolved, so you see what I mean? but this can be misunderstood. One can, as it were, rise to a higher level of consciousness or a higher level of experience by dwelling upon the imperfections of the lower level. But this doesn't always work, it can end up leaving you a bit sort of cynical. But the principle is that, yes, you must pass from the lower level to the higher level, but it would seem sounder psychology to point out the attractions of the higher level rather than dwell upon the lack of attractions of the lower level, do you see what I mean? Though that may on occasion be necessary and helpful.

Gunapala: Yes, you do seem to get a bit of both in our practices.

S: Yes. I mean, you can reflect upon the glories of Sukhavati, you don't necessarily have to dwell upon the miseries of life upon this particular earth-plane. If you reflect upon the glories of Sukhavati they will naturally draw you up, one could go about it that way too.

Prasannasiddhi: Could you say that in a way that was what the Mahayana ...

S: The Mahayana seems to have taken that sort of approach, much more than, one might say, the Theravada. One might say that in the case of Nanda, you know, the Buddha took him by the arm, I mean, Nanda was very attached to his beautiful wife so the Buddha took him by the arm and showed him the beautiful nymphs in Indra's heaven and he then said, "Well, in comparison with these nymphs, you know, my beautiful wife or the wife I thought so beautiful looks no better than a mutilated monkey." So it's as though here you've got both of these attitudes or approaches, or the possibility of dwelling upon either of them. You can either go round each individual woman, so to speak, and say, "Well look, she's no better than a monkey, look how ugly she is, look at her horrible short nose, her fat face" and all the rest of it, pointing out all the imperfections and trying to disgust someone or one can say, "Oh look at those beautiful heavenly nymphs, how wonderful they are." Do you see what I mean? One is the method of repulsion, the other is the method of attraction.

Gunapala: Yes, I can relate quite strongly to how he reacted to his wife or his wife-to-be once he had seen the dove-footed nymphs; it's like once you've seen something spiritual ...

S: You need a bit of a glimpse of that, I think if you're really to detach yourself from what is, in a sense, lower; I don't think you can detach yourself from the lower merely by dwelling upon its imperfections, I think you need some glimpse of what is higher to draw and attract you at the same time, even though after having had that glimpse you may well backslide and [70] may then need to remind yourself, 'Well, look what I've backslid into is not really all that attractive, I mean, look at this imperfection, look at that imperfection.' And that will help you turn your eyes back to, and recapture the vision of the higher beauties which you originally saw, But I think if someone hasn't had a glimpse of those higher beauties as I've called them, simply to draw their attention all the time to the ugliness of what they're actually in contact with may not help very much.

Murray: This is one of the difficulties of trying to relate what we're doing to people who are

completely new to it, it's almost like we have this big dimension we're all used to functioning in, to one degree or other, but for someone who doesn't see it, can't see it, it's very difficult.

S: I think this is where the aesthetic element is very important. If the shrine is very beautiful, for instance, the shrine at Sukhavati, or now I believe also the shrine at the Centre in Glasgow, I mean, sometimes the beauty of the shrine itself and the very appearance of the Buddha image and the way everything is kept can communicate some sort of a glimpse of a higher ideal that can really draw people.

Prasannasiddhi: Just the figure of the Buddha sitting in meditation.

S: Yes, yes, quite a few people have been very profoundly impressed just by these things before they knew anything about Buddhism as such or before they understood anything about Buddhism. In the same way atmosphere, I mean, some people are drawn by a quite peaceful, positive atmosphere.

Prasannasiddhi: This business of (dwelling?) on the lower sort of reminds me of the Christian thing with the priest in the pulpit bursting forth with his fire and brimstone sermon, but it just discourages them and gets them all scared, you know, rather than pointing at the positive ...

S: Well, even in the Catholic Church, to do them justice, they do have something to say about heaven, but they seem to let themselves go much more when talking about hell, so one gathers; it's as though their heart's more in the job in that particular ... (amusement)

Murray: That's what Blake said about Milton in "Paradise Lost".

S: Well, that was a bit different one could say, yes,

END OF 1.

S: (cont.) (Lost at beginning of tape) ... a rather different sort of sense.

Prasannasiddhi: Maybe the Christians feel they've got their hells and heavens mixed up, maybe some of the things they've got down there in hell actually should be up there in heaven.

S: Well this was one of Blake's big points; that energy did not belong really to hell, energy belonged to heaven, energy was a spiritual quality, not a diabolical quality. Delight was a heavenly quality, not a diabolical quality. He regards the angel as an iniquitous figure, the angel is one in whom all the energies are under restraint, and that is not a truly spiritual state according to Blake.

Prasannasiddhi: Well maybe even that ... he was sort of pointing out something but maybe he went to the other extreme.

[71]

S: Well, even Blake said in a sense the devils are the real angels, and the angels are the real devils! Anyway, if we go into angels and Blake there'll be no end of it and we won't finish this particular Sutta.

So anyway, the Buddha says, "The idea of the unlovely is to be made to grow for the abandoning of lust. Amity is to be made to grow for the abandoning of malice", amity means metta, and obviously the metta bhavana, the development of universal loving kindness is the antidote to hatred and malice. That doesn't require really much comment. Also, of course, metta, amity, is to be made to grow and to develop for its own sake. And then, "Mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing is to be made to grow for the suppression of discursive thought"; that's pretty clear, too, isn't it? One could say, backtracking a little bit, that, you know in the FWBO we have these two basic meditation practices, especially for beginners, well in the case of beginners they're the only practices: the mindfulness of breathing and the metta, or the metta and the mindfulness of breathing, you find them both here, but before them is the 'asubhabhavana'; it seems to be that the asubhabhavana element, in the case of the FWBO, is provided by the shrine and the puja, because that provides the element of higher beauty, which you find naturally attractive and on account of which you sort of start disentangling yourself from, so to speak, more worldly things, do you see what I mean?

Gunapala: Yes, not only the shrine but the whole spiritual community.

S: Yes, yes. And then of course the consciousness of impermanence, the fourth thing, well, that is a realization, that is an insight, that might arise in the course of study. So you've got, say, in the case of the FWBO, or within the FWBO framework, the shrine and the puja standing for or representing "the idea of the unlovely is to be made to grow for the abandoning of lust"; the practice of metta bhavana, quite clearly corresponding to "amity is to be made to grow for the abandoning of malice" and the practice of the mindfulness of breathing again quite clearly corresponding to "mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing is to be made to grow for the suppression of discursive thought" and "the consciousness of impermanence" or rather study, deeper study, more serious Dharma study, clearly corresponding to "consciousness of impermanence is to be made to grow for the uprooting of the pride of egotism". But also there's a meditation practice to help you here, can you remember which one it is?

Voices: The six element.

S: It's the six element practice, and the six element practice does exactly that. "In him, Meghiya, who is conscious of impermanence, the consciousness of what is not the self is established", as when you say, "the element earth is not mine, because I've got to give it up one day, it's impermanent", or "I am impermanent to the extent that I identify myself with that element earth: I have to give it back, it's not mine". So, "he who is conscious of what is not the self", that is to say what does not really constitute the self, does not really belong to the self, "wins the uprooting of the pride of egoism in this very life, namely, he wins Nibbana." So it's as though you can develop insight either via study, if you go deep enough, or, you know, with the help of meditation in the sense of an insight meditation.

Prasannasiddhi: What do you think "consciousness of what is not the self" means?

S: Well it's consciousness or the awareness that, the understanding or the [72] realization of the fact that something which you regard as inherently part of yourself, in a sense eternally part of yourself, is not such, and cannot be such, on account of the law of impermanence. If you realize the truth of that law of impermanence, you'll realize too the truth of selflessness. So what you thought belonged to you doesn't really belong to you because you can't keep it

forever, one day you have to give it back; whether it's the earth, the water, the fire or the air, which constitute your physical body or anything else, it's all got to be given back. So if you realize this, you realize impermanence and you also realize the truth of "no-self".

Prasannasiddhi: This "no-self" that's no self; no physical body, or ...

S: No, "no-self" is 'anata', you realize that there is no permanent, unchanging self with which you can identify, made up of these elements.

Prasannasiddhi: It doesn't imply anything further, such as a lessening of the ego, or a feeling for the universe or the external, you know, that goes beyond the subject-object.

S: That is implied but it isn't expressly stated here.

Murray: So positively, then you'd be able to identify with that which is eternal, as it were, that doesn't arise on conditions?

S: Well, Buddhism, and certainly Theravada Buddhism wouldn't speak in terms of identifying oneself with anything, not even of a so-called higher nature. The Mahayana might, to some extent, but the Theravada usually tends to avoid that sort of language.

Gunapala: What, identify with something higher?

S: Because it tends to avoid thinking in terms of any kind of self whatsoever, however subtle or refined.

Prasannasiddhi: But the Mahayana, that had the eternal Buddha-citta, the One Mind?

S: Yes, yes indeed, in a sense one is exhorted to identify with that or realize that that is your true nature - but that is not really the language of the Theravada, and apparently was not the language of the Buddha himself, though it is certainly, at least sometimes, the language of the Mahayana. I mean, I've discussed this whole question in a study group, maybe in the Hui Neng seminar ...

A voice: You did.

S: ... and I think in one or two other seminars, W I LANG ...

Gunapala: Is that with the Diamond Sutra?

S: No, the Platform Sutra.

Prasannasiddhi: It's just struck me as well that it almost seems as if there was not only were these four different things, four meditations; it almost seems as if they represented the stages of the path again.

S: Yes, that's true. One could say that perhaps the first three are sort [73] of sub-divisions of 'four' and 'four' corresponds, following the second list, to 'five' in the first list.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, I was thinking even of perhaps saying the idea of the unlovely is to be made to grow for the abandoning of lust, almost implied sort of vision, not in the sense of ...

S: (interrupting) It wouldn't be vision quite in the sense of insight.

Prasannasiddhi: No, no. And then amity to be associated with sila, in a way, and then the mindfulness to be associated with meditation, and then the other one to be associated with wisdom.

S: You could, of course, associate subha with kalyana; subha representing pure beauty, though here, of course, it's asubha that is spoken of, but subha is spoken of by implication, and that could certainly be associated with kalyana. Just as there is an 'asubhava bhavana', or just as there is 'asubha' and 'subha', in the same way there is 'kalyana' and 'papa'; there's kalyana Mitrata and papa Mitrata, that is to say spiritual friendship and, let's say, unspiritual friendship, in the same way that there is dwelling upon what is not so beautiful and dwelling upon what is really beautiful.

So clearly there is some connection between these two lists, the five things to begin with and the four other things. They can be, sort of, conflated, one might say, to make up a single, slightly more elaborate list. But you notice there's nothing said about the eight-fold path, presumably a later presentation, a later elaboration of the Buddha's teaching. It's only mentioned once, for instance in the Sutta Nipata, in a section which is supposedly among the more recent sections.

Gunapala: I mean, I can see how it relates to the eight-fold path, in different ways; it reminds me of the eight-fold path, let's put it that way.

S: Yes. Well, they are all inter-related, but the point mainly is that one doesn't have to think in terms of just one, fixed, determinate, exclusive, you know, presentation of the path, there are quite a number of presentations, even in the Pali canon. So here one can clearly speak of the spiritual life in terms of spiritual friendship and skilful behaviour, discussion of the Dharma, energy and insight, huh? One's got everything there, one could say.

Murray: Just as a matter of interest, Bhante, is the "Udana" a collection of verses from all the various suttas or is it, er, does it stand on its own?

S: No, most of the verses do not occur elsewhere in the canon. I believe a few of them do.

Murray: So which layer of the historical canon does the "Udana" come from?

S: It's certainly, on the whole, one of the older parts, perhaps one can't say really, in passing, much more than that; but yes, it does contain, or mainly consist of, what appears to be quite old material, reflecting perhaps even the earlier years of the Buddha's teaching life.

Murray: So it would be on a par with the 'Sutta Nipata', then?

S: It would seem so, yes, or on a par with certain parts of the Sutta Nipata, because the Sutta Nipata is not all uniformly early. Within the Udana it would see that the verses are even older than the prose portions, on the whole. [74] But with the 'Udana', broadly speaking, we do get

very close indeed to the Buddha's own days and much of the material, much of the teaching in the 'Udana' does actually reflect conditions in the Buddha's own life time and teachings actually given by the Buddha himself. I think we can be reasonably certain of that.

Murray: Did you say it was in the Sutta Nipata or in the 'Udana' that the verses are older than the prose?

S: In the Udana. The prose portions seem to be on the whole later and the verses don't always seem to be very closely connected with the prose portion. Anyway, here also there is an 'Udana', so perhaps we could read this, then conclude.

Gunapala: (reads)

"Thoughts trite and subtle, taking shape, cause mind to be elated.
Man, ignorant of these, with whirling brain, strays to and fro;
But knowing them, ardent and mindful, checks these thoughts of mind.
When mind's elation cometh not to pass, th'enlightened sage
Abandons utterly these thoughts of mind, that none remain."

S: This is a very simple presentation of the teaching, not having much connection, apparently, with what has gone before. (pause) So what is the Buddha saying here? "Thoughts trite and subtle, taking shape, cause mind to be elated". ('Ubilaba?') You all know what 'elated' means? A bit carried away. I'll just look up the dictionary to make quite sure exactly what it means.

Gunapala: 'Elated', I thought it means expanded, as well.

S: Yes, because quite clearly in the text the word is used in a quite negative sense.

Gunapala: It's as though someone's got a big head, their head has swollen! (pause)

S: (putting away dictionary) It doesn't help us very much; clearly the text is using this word in a negative sense and referring to a state of mind in which you're so elated, so joyful, you get rather carried away, you become unmindful, reckless and even confused, and start acting in a confused sort of way out of that confused sort of mental state of yours. I've spoken of this very often, how, especially in the early days, when people came on a retreat, they'd oscillate between being quite mindful but a bit alienated and rigid and being more open and, as it were, loosened up but being elated and unmindful and reckless. You see what I mean? There's a tendency to swing between these two extremes. It's very difficult to sustain the flow of energy and be happy and joyful and even elated, both at the same time, remain aware and mindful. It's very difficult to combine or to blend these two. So the Buddha says, "Thoughts trite and subtle, taking shape, cause mind to be elated. Man ignorant of these with whirling brain strays to and fro". The implication is that the straying is from one life to another, he strays to and fro between birth and death, birth and death, he oscillates in that sort of way, on account of his confused mental state, due to his elation. "But knowing them"; knowing them in the sense of really seeing through them, penetrating them, having insight into them, "ardent and mindful, checks these thoughts of mind. When mind's elation cometh not to pass, enlightened sage abandons utterly these thoughts of mind, that none remain." So Enlightenment [75] itself is spoken of here in terms of getting rid of that elation, that almost sort of hysterical kind of happiness, that leads to restlessness and recklessness and confusion.

Silaratna: Elation seems to imply some sort of intoxication.

S: Yes, intoxication, even infatuation.

Gunapala: It's the lack of mindfulness that causes the swaying to and fro, not the elation so much, is it?

S: Yes, this is why the Buddha says, "But knowing them, ardent and mindful,"; The fact of "knowing them" and being "ardent and mindful, checks these thoughts of mind", checks these unskilful thoughts in dependence upon which the elation arises. For instance, you may be very elated, thinking of your vast possessions, your riches, your power, your influence. Those unskilful thoughts may give rise to a state of elation on account of which you become mentally confused.

Gunapala: So it is actually the mindfulness that, because you're careful of not stirring up these thoughts.

S: It's not so much that the mindfulness checks the elation, it checks the unskilful thoughts that give rise to the elation. So this elation is very closely related to what we call the intoxicants. You can be intoxicated on account of your youth, you can be intoxicated on account of your health and strength, you can be intoxicated on account of your beauty, you get carried away by it.

Gunapala: So the mind that's left then is quite calm, it's an enlightened mind, well, the person wanting to become enlightened is not elated and sort of...

S: Not in that sort of way. Of course the word elation in English is used ambiguously, it can be used in a quite positive sense. But here it's used to translate a Pali term which has clearly a negative import.

Prasannasiddhi: Would the, er, when he says "knowing that", would that refer to sort of knowing this specific sort of habitual pattern you get into where maybe you get carried away?

S: No, in the sense of really recognizing, really seeing what happens, having insight into what happens, understanding the true nature of the situation, the true nature of those thoughts trite and subtle, seeing how they take shape, seeing how they cause the mind to be elated, and because you've seen all that so clearly, you know, becoming free from it.

Prasannasiddhi: You can sort of check it before you see it, you see it and say, 'Ah-ha, something could arise here that could be a bit unskilful'.

S: Yes. I mean, for instance, someone comes along, sort of slaps you on the back, gives you a cheque for a million dollars and you say to yourself, ah ha, wait, wait, don't get too elated!

Gunapala: Put it in the bank first! (laughter)

Silaratna: So mindfulness sort of brings out that quality of being able to anticipate what's likely to happen as a result of something?

[76]

S: Yes, yes. And also to follow, you know, what actually is happening. The elation is not, perhaps, in a sense, a bad quality, it can be a very positive quality, but you have to watch elation very carefully because you do tend to become unmindful when you become elated, so the elation can quite easily, even though it was originally positive, turn into something quite negative.

Gunapala: Because you lose your mindfulness, you get excited.

S: Yes because you lose your mindfulness, you get excited like a small child that gets so excited that he bursts into tears and starts misbehaving and has to be sent early to bed.

Gunapala: Yes, you see that quite often.

S: Yes, you can see children getting over-excited

Gunapala: And then everything goes wrong and they get a good hiding and get sent off to bed, and just a few minutes before they were enjoying themselves! (laughter)

S: Well, you can see human beings, you know, enjoying themselves like anything and then, bang, crash, something gets broken, well everything comes to a halt.

Gunapala: And everything goes wrong after (?)

S: Yes. There you were, just sort of playing around, very happy and jolly and excited; something goes wrong, you know, someone gets really hurt, perhaps, or a window gets broken or, you know, something gets knocked over. Then you're brought up short, you realize what you've been doing, you realize how unmindful you had been, due to your state of elation. Or, you know, you might be driving a car, being so happy and driving at speed down the motorway and you're so happy and carried away you don't realize you're driving dangerously, perhaps. You think, ah, this is great, this is the real way to live. If you're not so lucky, something untoward may happen. (agreement).

Gunapala: Yes, it's like closing your eyes doing high speeds, as it were, you can't see.

S: Well, some of my American friends used to be very fond of driving at speed, that is to say, it wasn't speed for them, 90 mph, and driving with their feet, not with their hands, that was one of their favourite tricks. And obviously of course it was so stupid. They were all college students, that's the sort of thing they get up to.

Murray: They drove with their feet on the steering wheel?

Gunapala: I can remember doing things like that? (laughter) I mean, this is typical of young teenagers with this sort of elated, excited ...

S: When you think maybe they'd been drinking and taking drugs, you can imagine the sort of state that they were in, and also the possible consequences.

Prasannasiddhi: I wonder if you could sort of equate it to the god realm, you know, the fact

that in the god realm the gods aren't really aware of impermanence.

[77]

S: Yes, yes, in a way they are intoxicated. I can remember having an experience of having to choose between two drivers, who was going to drive me back to the university: the one who was tripping or the one who was drunk! (laughter) I thought it was safer to let the one who was drunk drive because the effect would wear off a bit more quickly. He was also very, very sleepy so I had to sit beside him in the front and talk to him all the time to keep him awake. And then, of course, at one point we found all the traffic coming towards us, yes, sort of dividing on either side going ...

Gunapala: Down a one-way system?

S: Yes (laughter) in a town called Providence, so I said well just keep on, keep on, so he went down this street, with the traffic dividing all the way and we got down to the other end, luckily, without any damage having been done. (laughter)

Murray: Is this when you were at Yale?

S: Yes. Saw all these headlights coming towards me, suddenly, or towards us, towards the car and the other person was flaked out in the back, still tripping.

Gunapala: Oblivious to it all.

S: The master's wife, before we left she said to these students, 'Mind you look after Bhante, no dangerous driving! But that's what happened. It doesn't happen in England, I assure you, well, I mean, people around me. If anything they go to the other extreme, you might say, in England. Anyway, that is the sort of thing the Buddha was referring to. "Man, ignorant of these, with whirling brain, strays to and fro; But knowing them, ardent and mindful, checks these thoughts of mind. When mind's elation cometh not to pass, the enlightened sage abandons utterly these thoughts of mind, that none remain." Rather characteristically, for the Theravada let's say, nothing, no word is said about the positive state that remains, but clearly, by implication, that is there, you're not just left with nothingness absolutely; the mind is there, the mind in its pure state, you know, free from all these perturbations. But the Theravada doesn't dwell upon this, or doesn't enlarge upon that or say very much about it. That's left to be sort of understood or experienced, you know, for oneself.

Gunapala: The fact that no negative mental state exists, that's all that they stress, that is eradicated.

S: Yes, that is the tendency, yes. Anyway, that is it.

Are there any final points before we conclude? There's obviously a lot more that we could have gone into but much of that has been gone into on other occasions and is available, on tape, for those with time to listen. Is there any sort of general impression you get, thinking over the whole Sutta, the whole teaching in the Sutta?

Silaratna: It seems to sort of point to, I get the impression that Meghiya was quite a young chap and the Buddha was actually doing this for the benefit of this young friend of his.

S: Yes, perhaps he was rather impetuous, after all, he had his 'Kshatria' background.

[78]

Silaratna: So in that way the actual 'Udana' does relate quite strongly to the actual Sutta.

Murray: Yes, I got that feeling, that, there's two things, one, the Buddha might have taken Meghiya on more for that specifically; and just the Buddha's skilfulness, the way he handled the Situation.

Prasannasiddhi: Also the way he almost seems to put forth another path, in a way, another version from the usual paths of sila, samadhi and prajna.

S: Yes, but that is mentioned but only, you know, among the things to be discussed, huh? The general framework of the path is not in those particular terms on this occasion.

Prasannasiddhi: It's quite an interesting kind of thing.

S: It did occur to me that one could, you know, very easily, very as it were comfortably, give a quite useful talk or lecture just on these five things, drawing from this particular Sutta: the kalyana Mitrata, you know, the skilful behaviour, and so on.

Prasannasiddhi: I wonder if you could say that perhaps there was a reason why, that maybe 'sila, samadhi, prajna' is actually a more accessible kind of path.

S: Yes, it's more concise.

Prasannasiddhi: Some people may be a bit bewildered by this sort of path although, in actual fact, there are some good points.

Gunapala: It seems quite a clear path, to me, the way, you know, as you said, the spiral path and a very clear spiral path.

S: Yes, quite clear in the light of our experience within the FWBO, especially as regards kalyana Mitrata.

Gunapala: Yes, it does sort of relate quite strongly to, as you said, the FWBO. It does seem a lot of us are like Meghiya as well.

Prasannasiddhi: If Ananda's reciting this Sutta, but Meghiya is actually the attendant of the Buddha, could you say that Ananda had picked it up sort of later on?

S: Well he must have had it either from Meghiya or from the Buddha, or from someone who had heard it from either of them, or from someone who had heard it from one of them. But there is the point that one of the conditions Ananda is said to have laid down when he became the Buddha's personal attendant was that whatever teaching the Buddha gave in his absence, if he was away on some errand, the Buddha would repeat to him, you know, when he came back from his errand, so that he had, as it were, a full repertoire of all the Buddha's teachings. And it may well be, therefore, if Ananda had this sort of attitude that on various occasions when they were alone together he'd ask the Buddha, you know, just to repeat to him what had

happened or what he'd said on particular occasions, and in this way, was constantly enlarging his repertoire. That is a possibility. I used to rather wonder about Ananda and his sort of capacity for remembering all these things, which is the tradition; but I did have a friend some years ago who did actually have a memory like a tape-recorder and he used to, as it were, play back to me things [79] I'd said months and months earlier and whole conversations in detail, discussions in detail: "Well, you said this, then he said that, then somebody else said that, and then you replied in such and such a way ..."; he remembered it all without any difficulty, apparently. He had that sort of memory. So then it occurred to me that, very likely, Ananda was a person with that sort of memory. The tradition must have been based upon something, or upon some actual personal quality of Ananda himself. Maybe he didn't actually know or remember everything that's attributed to him in the Pali Canon, but he must have known, or must have remembered, quite a lot; perhaps quite a lot of that has actually come down to us.

Prasannasiddhi: This person actually had a memory in detail, almost word for word?

S: Yes, what struck me was that it was word for word, and he remembered the sequence of argument, the way in which the whole discussion developed. I never remembered, I was just left with vague impressions of what had been said. But no, he would remember what had been said and in what order. He could reproduce that without any effort, that was really quite remarkable.

Silaratna: To that extent that puts Ananda in quite a new light because it means our sort of knowledge of the tradition is dependent upon Ananda as it is upon the Buddha, really.

S: Yes, yes, indeed. But that did strike me at the time very much, that particular fact that particular point in connection with this friend of mine.

Prasannasiddhi: You could almost say it's like Plato and Socrates.

S: Except that it's pretty well known that Plato did elaborate on the words of Socrates, certainly the setting and so on; he composed it, you know, much more artistically than it ever could have happened, one might say. But Ananda, no doubt, sort of summarized and condensed. But this friend of mine could repeat word for word, and I knew it was accurate because when he repeated it, I would remember that, yes, that is what I said and this is how somebody else came in at that particular point. But I could not have reproduced it, you know, of my own accord.

Murray: The Buddha also had forty or forty-five years to make sure that, I mean, there must have been a certain body of the teaching that he systematized.

S: Yes, yes, there are certain things which he repeated so many times that they assumed a sort of regular form, even a tabulated form which, you know, he could pass on. Like, for instance, the 'sila samadhi prajna' formulation; and so on. Those were the sort of headings of this talks. Or 'the five spiritual faculties', you could give a talk under those five headings, or under the heading of 'the three lakshanas', and so on, or the ('Four Vipariyanas'?). And some sort of formulations or tabulations or some sets of headings caught on and became popular and lots of monks gave talks using these headings, and in that way those particular teachings contained or given under those headings became more important, or better-known. For instance, there was one formulation of the seven stages of purification, which is only found in

one part of the Pali Canon, and that hasn't become so popular as, say, the noble eight-fold path formulation, which is found in many passages. And there are formulations like this, five and four; these aren't nearly so well-known as the eight-fold path formulation, but they're also very useful, and should be put into wider circulation. Which is, of course, one of the reasons why [80] we've done this sutta or studied this sutta this weekend. It is deserving of much wider circulation, deserving of being much better known. It has some very useful lessons in it, some very useful points made.

Gunapala: What I was wondering is do we know what happened to Meghiya ...

S: I think we could find out. I can't recall off-hand, but I think if we looked through the Scriptures or commentaries, at least, we might well find out what happened to him. I don't remember whether he's one of the Theras who left verses in the "Theragatha", I don't think we have a copy at the moment so I can't see.

Gunapala: You don't know off-hand what happened to him when the Buddha said all this to him?

S: No, I don't think there's any record of that, though I think we can assume that he eventually gained Arhantship.

Prasannasiddhi: It's quite interesting the way there were all these different things in the Pali Canon, but certain things came, for one reason or another ...

S: (interrupting) Certain teachings, even very good teachings, were entirely neglected; like the teaching of the Positive Nidanas.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, yes, you don't know whether that was left out of the Theravadin approach during later centuries.

S: Well, it clearly was, because the positive Nidanas are enumerated in the Pali Canon, they're found there in the Pali Canon, it's the Buddha's teaching. But the Theravadins never, sort of, directed attention to them in the way that they directed attention to what we might call the Negative Nidanas, which was quite significant.

Prasannasiddhi: It seems strange the way they seem to have approached, and even in this you get the same hint that they've approached the, er, you know, with the idea of the Unlovely is to be made to grow for the abandoning of lust. They seem to be approaching the negative ...

Murray: You could say there's essentially nothing wrong with the material of the Theravada, it's the mental attitude with which they approach the material.

S: Well, when one said the Theravada one can't, in a sense, say that the Pali Scriptures are the exclusive property of the Theravadins, you know, that particular version has been handed down, you know, along that particular line and people belonging to that line, belonging to that tradition in modern times don't seem to fully appreciate, or even always fully to know, what they have in fact inherited, and they certainly don't always make full use of it, they just dwell upon certain things and not on others which are equally useful or perhaps more useful. That sort of tendency, on behalf of those who belong to the Theravada tradition seems to have been

established at a quite early date. It's not just a recent thing.

Prasannasiddhi: There's no reasons that have ever been postulated as to why it did occur?

S: Hmm, it's very difficult to say. I mean, some have suggested that what was very important in the very early days of Buddhism was to preserve the texts, well not the texts, the actual teachings, by word of mouth, and one [81] could only do that if one spent a lot of time, you know, learning things by heart and there is a suggestion that the learning of things by heart, the learning of the Buddhist teachings as transmitted orally, you know, by heart, took up so much of the time of many of the bhikkhus that they weren't able to meditate or even to study the teachings intelligently, they were just memorizing and passing on what they'd memorized to others until such time as it was all written down and then relatively safe. But meanwhile that tradition of concentrating on learning by heart and passing it on had been firmly established. So that meant that perhaps those monks had got quite out of touch with any real spiritual life. I mean, this is one sort of explanation that has been suggested. By the very necessities of the situation the conditions under which the teachings were transmitted, a lot of monks had to concentrate on just learning things by heart ...

END OF SEMINAR

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