General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

The Parabhava Sutta

Cassette One, Side One

SESSION ONE

Present: Sangharakshita, Dharmananda, Kulananda, Pranjananda, Sumitra, Chris Harper, Mike Howes.

Sangharakshita: So what we're going to be doing is a few suttas, perhaps a few suttas, from the Sutta Nipata. I say perhaps a few because it depends how quickly we get through them. We're going to start off with one, but it may well be that we spend four whole sessions on that one. We shall see. I don't have any extra copies, but I'll dictate the few verses that we'll be going through. Maybe by tomorrow we could have some copies; that may be useful. We're going to start off with a short sutta of fourteen verses, which is called Parabhava Sutta. I'll spell that for you: PARABHAVA SUTTA. The second 'a' is a long 'a'. This sutta is generally considered to be complementary to, or perhaps even antithetical to, the Mangala Sutta. You may remember the Mangala Sutta is one of the best known of the shorter suttas of the Pali canon. Mangala is usually translated as 'blessing' or 'auspicious sign'; and the characteristic of this sutta is that it describes, in a sort of cumulative manner, an ascending series of blessings, or auspicious signs, from very ordinary, humble, simple ones, right up to quite advanced, even quite rarefied, quite spiritual, even quite transcendental, blessings or auspicious signs. So as you follow through this sutta you find yourself, so to speak, going up and up the spiral, stage by stage, step by step. You go up a little bit with every single verse, and you end up in nirvana, or the state of Enlightenment. The Parabhava Sutta is complementary or antithetical in the sense that it represents the reverse process. We'll go in a minute into the meaning of this word parabhava more literally considered. But it's significant that of the three translations that we have here, the three translators all render this word parabhava quite differently. In Hare it is rendered as 'suffering'; then Chalmers renders it as 'failures'; and Sadhatissa translates it as 'downfall'. So: 'suffering', 'failure', or 'downfall'. But these translations don't really do justice to the term. Bhava means something like 'becoming'.

Prajnananda: As in bhavana?

S: It's related. There's bhava long 'a' and bhava short 'a'. Bhavana is connected with bhava with long 'a'. But their ultimate root is the same, a root meaning to 'grow' or 'develop' or 'become'; to undergo a process of transformation. So one has got in Pali an antithesis between bhava in the most general sense, and parabhava in the sense of the opposite of bhava. Now, one can distinguish in Pali literature two strata of the usage of this particular term bhava. It's as though the term itself undergoes a degradation. Mrs Rhys Davids in some of her writings has dealt with this.

Bhava originally seems to have meant simply 'growth', [2] 'development'. But inasmuch as existence itself is a growth and a development, it came to mean 'existence' in a somewhat broader, even philosophical, sense; even existence as viewed negatively, as tantamount to conditioned existence, the samsara. So that original and more positive connotation seems to have been lost. You'll find that we do get it - the original and more positive connotation in this sutta, as well as the opposite, which is of course parabhava.

So you've got bhava and parabhava: bhava representing growth, and parabhava representing the opposite of growth: decline, deterioration. 'Downfall' isn't very good because it suggests change of place. It doesn't suggest a counterprocess of decline or involution to the process of growth or development or evolution. So perhaps one could say that 'evolution' and 'involution' are pretty faithful translations. It's the reverse process, the counterprocess, the spiral down as distinct from the spiral up; parabhava is essentially that. So in the background of the sutta as in the background to the thought of the sutta you have this sort of concept of a spiralling up and a spiralling down. But by studying the spiralling down you can also get some indirect insight into the process of spiralling up, because the things which cause you to spiral downwards will, properly understood and overcome - surpassed - become as it were means of spiralling upwards.

So to understand how you evolve and how you involve how you develop and how you deteriorate these are different aspects of one and the same process, one and the same thing, one and the same insight. So when you're studying parabhava and the factors of parabhava, the factors of deterioration, you are at the same time indirectly studying the factors of growth and progress. There's no need to emphasize the negative aspect exclusively, though it can be very salutary as a warning because it shows you how you will decline if you don't develop. It does this step by step, just as the Mangala Sutta does. It traces a process of well, it's a contradiction to say 'progressive deterioration', but you know what I mean a process of ever increasing deterioration; which, as I've said, indirectly can remind you of the counterprocess of development: 'becoming' in that more positive, original sense.

So this little sutta starts off much as the Mangala Sutta starts, as I'm sure you'll recognize. What I think I'll do is: to begin with I'll read you the three translations straight through, one by one. You'll see how different they are. As we study the text verse by verse we'll be able to refer to the original Pali text and I hope get really close to the meaning.

So first of all, Hare, who translates parabhava as 'suffering'. Well, parabhava certainly involves suffering, but you cannot possibly really translate the word parabhava itself as 'suffering'. I think that's clear already. Anyway:

Thus have I heard: Once, when the Master was dwelling near Savatthi in Anathapindika's Park at Jeta Grove, a devi of surpassing beauty, lighting up the whole of Jeta Grove, approached him as night waned; and drawing near, she saluted him and stood at one side. Thus standing, she spoke this verse to the Master:

[3]
Devi About man's suffering We question Gotama;
We ask the Master now
The source of suffering. [1/91]

The Master Plain is the weal in life,
Plain is the suffering:
Prospers who Dharma loves,
Suffers who Dharma hates. [2/92]

Devi 'Tis truly so we know
Firstly of suffering:

Sir, tell us secondly
The source of suffering. [3/93]

The Master Who hath bad men as friends,
Nor maketh friends with good,
Who chooses bad men's ways:
A source of suffering that. [4/94]

I won't repeat the devi's verse each time. The Buddha continues:

When man loves company
And sleep, when he is lax
And slack, and known for wrath:
A source of suffering that. [6/96]

Who being rich, supports
Not parents in their age,
When gone is all their youth:
A source of suffering that. [8/98]

Who with false words deceives
A brahman or recluse
Or other mendicant:
A source of suffering that. [10/100]

When man of wealth and means,
Of gold and property,
Enjoys its sweets alone:
A source of suffering that. [12/102]

When man is proud of birth
And purse and family,
And yet ashamed of kin:
A source of suffering that. [14/104]

When man or woman dotes,
On drink and dice alike,
And all his savings wastes:
A source of suffering that. [16/106]

Who not content with his,
Is seen with others' wives,
Is seen with harlots too:
A source of suffering that. [18/108]

[4]
When man, passed youth, doth wed
A maid with rounded breasts,
Nor sleeps for jealousy:

A source of suffering that. [20/110]

When woman or when man
A spendthrift or a sot,
Is placed in sovran power:
A source of suffering that. [22/112]

When born of noble clan,
A man is poor and craves
For much and longs to rule:
A source of suffering that. [24/114]

These sufferings in the world
The wise discern, and blest
With vision Ariyan,
They seek the world of bliss. [25/115]

So that, no doubt, gives one a general idea of these 'sufferings', as Hare calls them. Now for Chalmers, which is rather different; he calls it 'Failures':

Thus have I heard: Once while the Lord was staying at Sravasti in Jeta's Grove in Anathapindika's pleasance, as night was passing away, a deity of surpassing beauty came to the Lord, flooding the whole grove with radiance. And after salutation meet, stood to one side, addressing the Lord in these stanzas:

'Concerning him who fails, I come to ask of Gotama from what that failure springs.' [1/91]

The Lord: 'Both worth and failure can be quickly seen: worth still aspires, but failure hates the light. [2/92]

'The second failure's he who loves the bad, courts not the good, and favours bad men's creeds. [4/94]

Third comes the critic, lazy, indolent and sleek; his constant carping marks him out. [6/96]

'Fourth failure's he who, well-to-do himself, supports not aged parents past their prime. [8/98]

Fifth failure's he who brahmins guides astray, or anchorites, or other wayfarers. [10/100]

'Sixth comes the wealthy man, with pelf and gear, who keeps his dainties strictly to himself.[12/102]

He seventh comes whom birth or wealth or clan inflates, till he looks down on kith and kin.[14/104]

[5]
The eighth's the rake who squanders all he gets, fast as it comes, on women, drink, and dice. [16/106]

Ninth comes the lecher who, not satisfied with his own wives, is seen about with whores, or caught in dalliance with others' wives. [18/108]

Tenth comes the dotard who, in failing age, a maiden takes to wife, with ripe round breasts, so fair he cannot sleep for jealousy. [20/110]

Eleventh failure's he who puts in charge a drunken, spendthrift rake, of either sex. [22/112]

Twelfth comes th'ambitious noble, lacking means, who fondly schemes to get himself made king. [24/114]

The noble sage, whose penetrating eye these failures scans, has won the realms of Bliss.' [25/115]

That's a bit different, isn't it? Now the last one's different again. This is in prose, not in verse:

Thus have I heard: Once the Buddha was dwelling near Savatthi in the Jeta grove at the monastery of Anathapindika. Then, one beautiful night, a certain devata, having illuminated the whole Jeta grove with surpassing splendour, came to the Buddha and, making salutations, stood on one side and uttered these words:

(1) I wish to ask you, Gotama, about a person who suffers downfall. I have approached you in order to inquire as to the causes of downfall. (91)

(2) The Buddha: Easily known is the progressive one, easily known is the one who declines: He who loves Dhamma progresses, he who hates it declines. [92]

(4) One who loves the company of the vicious finds no delight with the virtuous; he prefers the doctrine of the ignorant and misguided this is a cause of one's downfall. [94]

(6) Being fond of sleep, talkative, lazy and irritable this is a cause of one's downfall. [96]

(8) He who being sufficiently affluent does not support his father and mother who are old and infirm this is a cause of one's downfall. [98]

(10) He who deceives by falsehood a priest, monk or any other spiritual preceptor this is a cause of one's downfall.[100]

(12) Having ample wealth, assets and property, enjoying them alone this is a cause of one's downfall. [102]

[6]
(14) If a man is conceited through being born in a high social class or by his position in society and looks down on his own kith and kin this is a cause of one's downfall. [104]

(16) To be a playboy, a drunkard, a gambler, and to squander all one earns this is a cause of one's downfall.[106]

(18) Not to be contented with one's wife but to be seen with a mistress or the wives of others

this is a cause of one's downfall. [108]

(20) Being past one's youth, to take a young wife and to be unable to sleep for jealousy of her this is a cause of one's downfall.[110]

(22) To place in authority a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of like behaviour this is a cause of one's downfall.[112]

(24) If a member of an influential family [or social or other grouping], with vast ambition and of slender means, seeks power or control over others this is a cause of one's downfall. [114]

(25) Reflecting thoroughly on these causes of downfall in the world, the wise one, endowed with insight, enjoys bliss in a happy state.[115]

That's a little clearer, isn't it? - being in prose rather than poetry.

Anyway, let's take Hare as the basis, but refer to the Pali text. I think the opening is familiar; as I said, it's practically identical with the opening of the Mangala Sutta. The end of the night is drawing near, dawn is approaching, and the Buddha is staying at Sravasti, at the Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. A devi, that is to say a god, one might say, of surpassing beauty lights up the whole Jeta Grove and comes to the Buddha. According to tradition, this was the particular time of day, this was the hour, when beings from other realms, that is to say gods and so on, approached the Buddha and even were taught by him.

Someone was asking me about this recently, that is to say, how literally can one take this that these supernormal beings, these devas, these gods, approached the Buddha in this way, just as a human being might approach him? Traditionally, Buddhists have had no difficulty in just accepting this. They accepted a sort of stratified universe with beings of different kinds living on the different levels, just like human beings do, so many different heavens of gods. If one can just leave it like that, probably that is best.

But what I did say recently to one person who enquired about this matter was that we can, as it were, imagine the Buddha not dreaming as we do, not dreaming in the way that an ordinary unenlightened person dreams, but having a corresponding, an analogous, experience. The Buddha, after all, is Enlightened, so there's no question of unskilful [7] mental states finding expression in his dreams. The Buddha doesn't even sleep in the ordinary sense, according to tradition. So if he does undergo some experience analogous to sleep, analogous to the dream state, we could say in the case of the dream state, that he experiences very positive forms comes into contact with highly positive beings and there's a sort of dialogue going on between them; just as in the case of our dreams dialogues go on, conversations go on, discussions go on, between the different bits of our fragmented personalities. One could look at it in that kind of way: that this sort of experience is the analogue in the case of the Enlightened person of what in the unenlightened person is dream-experience.

So I give this explanation, for what it is worth, for consideration. This might make it easier for people to understand, or maybe not to understand, but to accept the introduction to the sutta as being not entirely fanciful, or mythological in the reductive sense of the term. Maybe we don't really need to say anything more than that, because the content of the verses stands on its own merits, as it were. One can detach the verses from that particular speaker. Perhaps

the verses, which are in the form of a sort of dialogue, represent a train of thought passing through the Buddha's mind, which he didn't experience abstractly, but which he experienced as a sort of dialogue between so to speak, himself and this radiant deva-being. But whether that is the case or not, we have to take the content of the verses, as I've said, on their own merit.

Prajnananda: You don't think there's any significance about a devi asking this particular sort of question?

S: Ah, this is another point. When you say a devi, you mean a female being, do you?

Prajnananda: That is what ...

S: Well, actually, no, it doesn't. Hare makes it devi, which is feminine gender.

Prajnananda: Ah, it's a translation of devata?

S: Yes, it is actually devata, which is 'divinity'. You can't reproduce that in Anglo-Saxon. We've got 'god' or 'goddess', but we haven't got anything, as it were, abstract. The nearest would be 'a godhead', but 'godhead' is usually quite different in English.

Kulananda: An angel perhaps?

S: No, because angel is you would have to render it 'an angelicity', because it's an abstract form, you see: a divinity.

Kulananda: So it's not necessarily embodied?

[8]
S: Not necessarily. The term does not directly imply anything embodied. It's a divinity, a devata. It is grammatically feminine, that might have misled the translator. But there are lots of words that are grammatically feminine, but are actually masculine, and vice versa. So it is a divinity. One could, perhaps regard it as a sort of angelic being, an androgynous being, which wasn't either male or female in the ordinary human sense. (Pause)

Anyway, the first question comes, according to Hare's translation: 'About man's suffering we question Gotama: We ask the master now the source of suffering'. Now, does the text say anything about suffering? No, actually it doesn't. It says: Parabhavantam purisam mayam pucchama Gotamam, which means, the literal translation is: 'I question Gotama ...' - no, not even that. 'We question Gotama about man's parabhava, man's decline, deterioration.' Yes, suffering is implied, but it's only implied. So, 'We question Gotama about man's' here the word is purisa, which is actually 'man' as distinct from 'woman'. Usually, when it is 'man' in the more general sense the word manussa is used. But here it is definitely purisa, which has overtones of male, the masculine, as distinct from female. So, 'We question Gotama about the decline, the downfall, the deterioration, of man'. There is a suggestion of 'man' rather than 'woman'; you might have noticed already that some of the verses are very much more relevant to man rather than to woman. Some of them at least.

So then, 'We have come to ask the Bhagavan' usually translated as the Lord, the one which is

endowed with all positive qualities kim parabhavato mukham: 'what is the source of downfall?' 'What is the source of deterioration?' So this is the first question.

And then the Buddha's reply to that first question is really very clear though the translators deal with it rather oddly. According to Hare: 'Plain is the weal in life, plain is the suffering: prospers who Dharma loves, suffers who Dharma hates'. And then, according to Chalmers: 'Both worth and failure can be quickly seen. Worth still aspires, but failure hates the light'. It seems to me to be wildly astray, especially that second line. Saddhatissa says: 'Easily known is the progressive one; easily known the one who declines. He who loves Dhamma progresses; he who hates it declines'. Well, actually it's really quite straightforward. Suvijano bhavam hoti, suvijano parabhavo: dhammakamo bhavam hoti, dhammadessi parabhavo. So 'easy to know, easy to understand, is growth' or, 'progress is easy to understand', 'development is easy to understand'. And suvijano parabhavo: 'decline, deterioration, is easy to understand'. It's easy to understand what makes the difference.

Then it says: dhammakamo bhavam hoti, dhammadessi parabhavo, which is absolutely clear in the Pali. So, dhammakamo: now this is quite interesting because here again we've got a word used in the positive sense which later in Buddhism, even as represented by the Pali canon, or a later strata of the Pali canon, has a more negative sense: the word kama. Kama usually means 'desire' in a rather negative sense. For instance, you've got the kamaloka, as distinct from the [9] rupaloka and arupaloka. You've got kama in the sense of lust. You've kama in the sense of craving, in the sense of sensuous desire, even sexual desire. But originally it was just desire in the broad sense, neither negative nor positive, just desire. It could be the one, it could be the other. Not even just desire, that's a very strong term. It's got almost the connotation of passion, or even love, you could say.

Kulananda: A Blakean sense of desire?

S: Yes, in a Blakean sense. So, dhammakamo bhavam hoti: 'One who' you might say 'loves the Dhamma passionately', 'one who really desires the Dhamma he grows, he progresses, he advances'. So one could say quite a lot about Dhamma. Perhaps it isn't really necessary to say very much. Dhamma is the moral law, the spiritual law, the Buddha's teachings, the Truth, whatever helps you to evolve spiritually; that is Dhamma. So one who really desires the Dhamma, one who loves the Dhamma, he is the one who grows, he is the one who develops. And dhammadessi parabhavo. So, dessi is 'hate'. It's also not just hate, there's another word: detests. 'He who hates or detests the Dhamma, he declines, he deteriorates, he suffers downfall'. You can almost make your own translations out of this. Perhaps you should try it!

Prajnananda: Yes, I was just thinking that.

S: I think it might be worthwhile going a bit more into this whole question of, let's say, loving the Dhamma, or loving the Dharma, as the sort of mainspring, if you like, of growth, of development, of the Higher Evolution. Because you notice the emphasis is very definitely on the emotional and the conative, the effective and the conative. 'He who loves the Dhamma, or the Dharma, he is the one who grows'. So this is really very important. This is what one has got to cultivate if one wants to grow, if one wants to develop. One's got to cultivate a love of the Dhamma. So one has to ask oneself, well, has one really got that; does one really love the Dhamma? So how will it show itself if you love the Dhamma?

Dharmananda: Practice.

S: Yes. But in a more sort of simple basic way. Let's take a worldly analogy. Suppose you love another person, another human being. Let's say, for the sake of example, you love a woman. How will your love manifest itself? What's the first way in which it will manifest itself?

Kulananda: You'll spend time with her.

S: You'll spend time with her. You'll want to see her. You'll want to do things for her, want to give her things, want to be accepted by her, etc, etc. So when you love the Dhamma you'll want to spend time with the Dhamma, which is what I suppose is meant by practising the Dhamma. You'll want to read about the Dhamma, want to study the Dhamma. You'll want to practise it [10] in the way of meditation. You'll want to hear about it, want to associate with people who are interested in it. If you don't have those characteristics, it's very doubtful whether you love the Dhamma. If you regard the Dhamma as something dull and boring but which you believe does you some sort of good; well, that's not really loving the Dhamma. You won't progress very much or very quickly with that sort of attitude. So you've got to have that sort of love for the Dhamma.

It is perhaps interesting that this word kama is used here: a very basic word, which could be translated probably quite adequately as 'passionate love'. I was reading the other day a book of spiritual odes by a great Sufi master and it's interesting that there you get this sort of blend, in a way, of it's not really a blend, but in a manner of speaking of the sacred and the profane. You get this passionate love directed towards some other human being, but it's all, as it were, symbolical. Not that the literal interpretation is altogether excluded, but the literal is subsumed in the symbolic. But it's a total involvement of a very strong, not to say violent passion, sort of transposed to higher and higher levels, until it reaches the spiritual level. It doesn't represent a dull, tepid kind of interest, which is the sort of interest people usually have in the Dhamma. (Pause)

So, if you really love the Dhamma, you want to spend time with Dhamma, you want to practise it, you want to hear about it. These are the signs that you really do love the Dhamma. And you want to give, just as you like to give the woman that you're in love with all sorts of presents, squander your wealth on her. If you really love the Dhamma, you'll squander your wealth on the Dhamma, except that in this case it isn't squandering. It's the best possible investment. Though you don't actually think of it in that way; you just want to give.

So these words are very significant. It really sums up the essence to it. It doesn't help all that much just being convinced intellectually that the Dhamma is good for you. No doubt that helps a bit, helps prepare the way, but you don't really get very far, you don't move very fast, until you start loving the Dhamma.

Chris Harper: This isn't really sraddha we're talking about; it's not really faith?

S: No, it seems that it's rather different from faith. The word 'faith' obviously isn't used. It's just 'desire'. Faith in the Buddhist sense suggests that you're already sort of in possession of the Dhamma, let's say to speak in terms of the Dhamma, rather than in terms of the Buddha. You're already in possession of it, already enjoying it, already rejoicing in its highly positive

qualities. That constitutes your faith. But in the case of desire for the Dhamma, it's as though you not are yet in enjoyment of it, but you want it, you desire it. (Pause) Clearly you must have got some inkling of it, some little feeling for it, even some little glimpse of it, otherwise you wouldn't even be able to desire it, but you're not really in possession of it, you're not really enjoying it to any great extent. It's still something very [11] much that you're aspiring after. It's like the beautiful woman you just glimpse in the distance on the Tube and you hope you might meet her next time you travel that way. Or you might even so arrange things so that you are travelling that way again at the same time the next day.

But this phrase underlines the importance of the emotions being engaged. In any sphere of life, in any sphere of activity, we don't get very far unless our emotions are really engaged. It has been said: 'Tell me what you love and I'll tell you what you are'. It is rather like that. As I expect you know, when you're in love in the ordinary sense, you're very happy to talk about the object of your affections to anyone who lends a sympathetic ear. (Laughter) You might even bore your friends with your praises of this unsurpassable creature that nobody else, apparently, can see very much in. In the same way, if you really love the Dhamma, you'll like talking about the Dhamma, you'll want to talk about it to as many people as possible. You don't have to take thought about how to propagate the Dhamma no you just can't stop talking about it to whoever you happen to meet or at least communicating it in some way or other. (Pause)

So the criterion is very simple, very straightforward. 'If you love the Dhamma, you will progress'. So if you want to progress, love of the Dhamma is what you really have to cultivate. You have to engage your emotions, you have to make sure that your emotions are engaged. I think people have found this in the case of Dharma study; I think some of them found it in Tuscany last year. They started finding that the Dharma as encountered in study was lovable, was interesting, was enjoyable, was, even, fun which some of them had not really thought before. So perhaps one should think of getting involved with Buddhism more in terms of falling in love in the most highly positive way possible.

What about the other side of the picture? Dhammadessi parabhavo: 'The one who hates the Dharma, the one who detests the Dharma, he declines'. So what does one mean by hating or detesting the Dharma? Is it in fact possible? How is it possible? What does one mean by hating the Dharma? Detesting the Dharma? How does that show itself? Is it something that you do consciously and deliberately? What is meant by this?

Dharmananda: It seems like there are two sides to it: If you are of another religion such as, say, when the Muslims ransacked the monasteries that's obviously one way of looking at it. But I think the obvious other side is that you don't like the mirror that the Dharma puts up in front of you.

S: Mmmm, yes. You blame the Dharma instead of blaming yourself, or you blame the Buddha instead of blaming yourself, or you blame the Sangha instead of blaming yourself. The Sangha is, perhaps one might say, the favourite scapegoat. You hate the Sangha, you detest the Sangha. (Long Pause)

Sumitra: Do you think it's possible to hate the Dharma without knowing anything of it?

S: Well, clearly you can't. If, for instance, you're a Muslim destroying Buddhist images well, you can in a manner of speaking hate the Dharma without knowing anything about it. You hate the external manifestations, which you interpret or understand in a particular way. You see all these images. And to you that is just idol-worship, which is a terrible sin. So you just smash all those images ...

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Sumitra: I was just wondering if there's any sense in which you can say that the fact that you are declining means that in a sense you hate the Dharma.

S: It's a vicious circle it seems. If you decline, you hate the Dharma, and if you hate the Dharma, you decline. It's the negative spiral; the one increases the other.

Kulananda: I wonder if there isn't a sense in which one can hate the Dharma without actually recognizing that it is the Dharma one is hating inasmuch as if the Dharma is that which pertains to the good, or activities which produce happiness, then hating the Dharma may be manifest as hating a moral action of some sort.

S: Yes. Or, for instance, one could give the example: some people dislike, let us say, the idea of single-sex communities. That is because they do not understand, they've failed to understand, the sort of effect that living in a single-sex community can have on one. They fail to understand that, and they see a single-sex community simply as a very negative, unhealthy, restrictive sort of situation, and therefore dislike it because they have not, in fact, understood it. (Kulananda: Right.)

So in this sort of case, one hates the Dharma, or at least a particular external manifestation of the Dharma, because one has not really understood it at all.

Mike Howes: Could you have a situation where someone's had no contact whatsoever with the Dharma, but because they reject or accept certain principles ... ?

S: It might be putting it too strongly to speak of them as hating the Dhamma. Hating suggests something almost personal, doesn't it? As if you've got a personal grudge against the Dhamma. Maybe here we come a bit near the borderline between Buddhism and Christianity. I'm thinking of the figure of Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost actually hating God, and saying: 'Evil, be thou my good'. It's that sort of attitude. Within the framework of the poem he adopts an attitude of deliberate hostility towards the good. That is something which is a bit rare in Buddhism. It's a Mara-like [13] sort of attitude. But, you see, you don't get the impression that Mara really hates the Dhamma; he's just naughty, mischievous, troublesome. Whereas in Milton's poem Paradise Lost Satan hates God. But that is a sort of mentality which is rather foreign to Buddhism. Even people in Buddhist countries who don't practise the Dhamma don't actually hate it. Here the Buddha does seem to envisage the possibility of someone actually hating or detesting the Dhamma which seems a very, very morbid state indeed. It's almost difficult to imagine, difficult to envisage. It represents a very, very extreme form of deterioration. Perhaps we just don't have much contact with people of that sort.

Kulananda: Perhaps a form of cynicism is closer.

S: Yes, yes, indeed. Cynicism is the adopting of a negative attitude towards what is positive.

Prajnananda: It's almost a sort of wilful self-destructive attitude.

S: Yes. (Pause) So we could even paraphrase here, and say: 'He who loves the Dhamma progresses, but he who is cynical about the Dhamma declines'. That does ring a bit more true in terms of our own experience perhaps.

Sumitra: That would ring a few bells, I feel, with people, that kind of rendering of it. It probably puts it more powerfully.

S: Also perhaps more subtly. (Sumitra: Yes.) You could paraphrase again, extend the paraphrase: 'He who is enthusiastic about the Dhamma progresses; he who is cynical about the Dhamma declines'.

Mike Howes: How can you be cynical about the Dharma? I can't grasp ...

S: Well, to give an example there's so many examples A says to B: 'Come on, let's go on retreat.' And B says: 'What's the use of going on a retreat? You just get a lot of people sitting around and pretending to be holy. I don't get anything out of it.' Talk in that sort of way is cynical; he depreciates, he runs down.

Kulananda: You get a lot of that with people talking about Centres and Communities: 'Let's go down the Centre.' 'Oh no, boring old ... '

S: Right, yes. Cynicism and enthusiasm are antithetical, just like love and hate. So love and hate are the very broad, very general, positive and negative emotions; but enthusiasm and cynicism are much more specific forms. But perhaps they are more appropriate in this sort of context. Enthusiasm for the Dharma and cynicism with regard to the [14] Dharma. (Pause) You may remember in

Santideva's Bodhicaryavatara there is a definition of virya, which is usually translated as 'energy in pursuit of the good'. A little while ago I looked up the original Sanskrit and I found that the term translated as 'energy' is utsahana, which is actually 'enthusiasm'. So that seems to make better sense. Virya is enthusiasm in pursuit of the good, not just energy in pursuit of the good.

Kulananda: Enthusiasm for the good.

S: Yes. That is virya. So that comes very close to loving the Dhamma in the sense of enthusiasm for the Dhamma. The good is practically identical with the Dhamma. So it's that positive, enthusiastic inspired attitude. It's not just loving in a more ordinary, flat sort of sense, or a sort of sentimental sense. It's that wholesome, emotional involvement with the Dhamma that is really meant. Not just loving the Dhamma, but admiring it and being enthusiastic about it. You're always singing its praises, being involved with it, always finding it interesting, fascinating, inspiring. (Pause) But downfall comes when you find the Dhamma, or what you understand or see as the Dhamma, as a bit uninteresting, a bit flat, a bit dull, a bit boring. And you start getting cynical about it and then of course you certainly don't feel inspired.

Dharmananda: It makes me wonder how the Theravada survived as quite a long-standing limb of the Dharma because their's is quite a negative approach, isn't it?

S: I think this is because there's an official Theravada and a non-official or unofficial Theravada. I think it's the unofficial Theravada that has kept the official Theravada alive; that is, the rather simple piety of the ordinary lay people.

It rather reminds me of a little story; this is just remotely analogous. I remember there was a famous Indian bhikkhu called Rahula Sankrityayana [?]. He gave up being a bhikkhu after many years. But anyway, he went to Tibet doing research into Tibetan manuscripts, especially Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts from India which had been preserved in Tibet. At that time he was a vegetarian, and of course in Tibet it's not always easy to get vegetables. So when he came back he was asked by his friends how he'd managed to survive, what had kept him going. So he said it was just the ants in the rice that kept him going. (Laughter)

[note: Rahula Sankrityayana: (1893 - 1963) Major figure in revival of Buddhist studies in modern India. Visited Tibet four times 1929 - 1939, examining, copying and photographing rare manuscripts. A colourful figure with a vision of a Buddhist revival in India. Sometime bhikkhu, married twice, sometime member of the All-India Communist Party. Translated many Buddhist texts into Hindi. Teacher of Jagdish Kashyap.]

So you could say that in the case of the official Theravada, it's just the ants in it all the things that shouldn't have been there, like worshipping gods and things of that sort that kept it going, that provided it with a blood transfusion of emotional energy. Sinhalese monks, especially the Western-educated, English-speaking ones, are always apologizing for the things that the lay Buddhists believe in and do. But sometimes you get the impression that there's more life in the lay Buddhism, the popular lay [15] Buddhism, however 'unorthodox' inverted commas it may actually be, or however lacking in doctrinal purity.

I think, therefore, it's very important in connection with the Dhamma to try to find out what really does arouse one's emotions, whether it's puja, whether it is meditation, or whether it is discussion and study. It's very important to find out what actually does move one, what actually does inspire one, and make sure you give plenty of space to that. (Long Pause)

Kulananda: I think of late to a certain extent some of us may have got a bit overbalanced. There was a time when the Dharma inspired people to work and they started working a lot for the Dharma because they were inspired to. As a result of that, some of us have lost touch with what initially inspired us. (S: Right.) And work is in itself not inspiring. You've got to have something else going on in order to get that added depth in your life and stay in touch with why you're working.

S: Yes, I have heard that there have been people, I think usually working in the context of a coop, who've suddenly stopped after a year or two of working and said to themselves: 'What on earth am I doing this for?' They've lost that connection with the Dhamma and they've felt: Well, I might just as well be working outside in the world. What's the difference? I'm back where I was some years ago.' Because they've lost contact with the Dhamma presumably. They no longer feel that they are working for the Dhamma. Or perhaps they can see it yes, money goes from the Coop to the Centre but there's not any great feeling there with that. Saying money goes from the Coop to the Centre well, so what? They've lost their feeling for

the Centre, because they've lost their feeling for the Dharma; and the Centre is a Dharma-Centre.

Kulananda: In fact you can begin to resent the fact that money is going to the Centre. It's been known to happen.

S: Right. So it does stress the importance, even the necessity, of maintaining that contact with the Dhamma. Well, not just contact with it, but maintaining what the text calls dhammakama, a sort of passionate, emotional involvement with the Dhamma. (Pause)

Sumitra: Just in relation to that point of Kulananda's: Do you think it's possible in fact for a working situation to inspiring of itself?

S: Well, I did once know someone who worked in Kew Gardens. (Laughter) He became a bhikkhu in fact. He was always talking about Kew Gardens.

What could inspire one in a working situation? It does perhaps raise the question as to what we mean by inspiration? Are there levels of inspiration? There can perhaps be pseudo-inspiration.

[16]
Kulananda: There is enthusiasm, which is often mistaken for it. You can become very enthusiastic about building up a business and about the people you're working with.

S: Yes, you can become very enthusiastic about something very trivial.

Kulananda: You can get very enthusiastic about the fact that you're going to make a lot of money and that in itself can arouse enthusiasm which you can mistake for inspiration.

S: Well, that can be a bit more like inflation than enthusiasm.

Sumitra: How about, say, an artist who's working in quite a creative context?

S: Well, that isn't work in a very representative or typical sense, is it? It is rather specialized. And the arts do at least begin to approximate to the spiritual life.

Sumitra: Well, the reason I asked was as to whether one could move towards a working situation which was more directly, genuinely inspirational. Because a lot of people do say: 'All the creative activity that I used to undertake, I no longer undertake because I'm too busy working!' Do you feel that is actually a possibility? Or whether work always has to be almost a second string, if you like? You make it not damaging, but you can't make it necessarily positively inspirational.

S: I think you can. I think a lot depends upon your attitude to the work and in this particular context how much contact with the Dhamma you do keep up. For instance: the famous example of packing beans. Well, if you can really feel this is your particular contribution to Friends Foods which is in turn making a really solid contribution financially to the Centre; as a result of that the Centre is able to function; and so many people are becoming involved and benefiting you could genuinely feel that and be packing beans in a really happy, inspired sort

of way. That is possible if you just reflect. If you are mentally and emotionally preoccupied with the highly positive context of your work, the work itself takes on something of that positivity.

Sumitra: So, in a sense, as I read that, what actually makes your work inspirational is the attitude or state of mind which you take to it, rather than the actual work itself. (S: Yes.)

Kulananda: And how can you be inspired by packing beans?

S: Well, for instance, supposing you're going to marry the [17] girl that you're in love with and supposing you buy a house, with what happiness will you be putting up curtains and laying down the lino? (Laughter) You see? Whereas if you were doing it for Friends Building, maybe it would just be a drag. Do you see what I mean? It's the attitude that makes the difference. You imagine to yourself the smile that will come to her face when she walks through the door and sees what you have done for her, etc, etc. Well, you can imagine the little scene ... (Laughter)

Chris Harper: If one is just working whatever it is that you're doing perhaps if you're selling something to someone, and you're just enthusiastic about what you're doing and you're just really enjoying doing that and your energies and so on, can you not, is that not perhaps the beginning of the inspiration: just the way that you do it?

S: Well, yes, right. But I would say that you can't I won't say 'find work inspiring' but you can't, I think, find inspiration in the midst of work unless you're in contact at the same time with other sources of inspiration. I doubt if work just by itself in complete isolation can really inspire you. So, if you're working in, say, a coop, you can't be inspired just by packing beans. You have to be in contact with something else which enables you to find packing beans I won't say inspiring but which enables you to keep up your inspiration while actually doing that. In other words, you have to keep up some meditation practice, some contact with the Dhamma through study, kalyana mitrata, and so on. If you're generating inspiration from those sources, well, it can make you sufficiently aware of the Dharmic context of your work for you to be able to find inspiration in the midst of the work.

Kulananda: Perhaps there's another way you can work as well. If you actually develop this enthusiasm for your work which Chris is describing, perhaps then you're more alive and more awake, and then when you come into contact with kalyana mitras or with the Dharma ... In fact, you're able to meditate better because you've got this enthusiasm, this energy, going.

S: Because you're accustomed to putting yourself wholeheartedly into things.

Kulananda: So you can turn the enthusiasm into inspiration. But enthusiasm in itself isn't inspiration.

S: No.

Chris Harper: I was thinking that you can get inspired just by throwing yourself into work, perhaps if you don't want to do it; just by putting yourself wholeheartedly into that. And then the good thing that comes out of that I call inspiration. But perhaps you'd call it something else then.

[18]
S: You feel sort of energized?

Chris Harper: You feel quite energized and ...

S: Because your energies are actually being deployed. And that is a very satisfying sort of feeling, isn't it? When you're experiencing your own energies because you're putting them into whatever it is that you're doing. Maybe it isn't inspiration, but it's certainly heading in that direction.

Chris Harper: But that could come out of just throwing yourself into work alone, without any other outside influence.

S: Yes, it can. Well, I think for you to be able to keep that up you'd need outside sources of inspiration. Otherwise I think sooner or later you start wondering: 'Well, why am I doing this? It was OK to begin with, but now it's getting a bit boring.'

Kulananda: Or you start deploying that energy in unskilful means where it just wastes away.

S: Some people of course do have an almost sensual enjoyment of the actual processes of work actually sawing that bit of wood, or knocking down that wall, or even writing with a pen on that piece of paper. Do you know what I mean?

Chris Harper: Isn't it perhaps sufficient to tackle your work just for its own sake, for the effect it has on you, for the integrating effect it has on you?

S: Well, then it isn't 'for its own sake'. It's work for the sake of me not work for the sake of work. Which is fair enough. But then why should you want to work for the sake of its effect on you? That suggests that you've got an idea at the back of your mind about changing yourself and about work as an instrument of change. (Chris Harper: Yes, precisely.) But that means you've got to have some inspiration behind all that which is inspiring you to change yourself; therefore you take up work. I think however positive you may be, if you're left just working on your own in one particular job even in a coop week after week, month after month, and you don't have independent contact with other sources of inspiration, I think you will dry up after a while and begin not to enjoy what you're doing, and even resent it. I think it has happened that in some of the coops, or at least in the case of some of the people some of the time, they've been working so hard that they have lost effective contact with their reasons for working and of course with that inspiration. I think one mustn't allow that to happen. The wise coop manager just makes sure that that doesn't happen so far as his workers are concerned. (Pause)

Kulananda: Perhaps it's your first responsibility to [19] yourself when you join a coop that you do retain your other forms of inspiration, retain those contacts.

S: Otherwise it's like - to revert to the previous analogy - there you are, working on that house for that bride-to-be of yours, but then you never see her. She never comes to see you and you lose contact with her. You think maybe she's gone away, and there you are working [away] year after year. And after a while you start losing interest, especially if you think that maybe she's lost interest in you. And you just put down your hammer and nails and all the rest of it.

(pause)

Anyway, perhaps that is enough of that first verse. So it is quite easy to understand what the Buddha is saying: 'Progress is easy to understand, decline is easy to understand. One who loves the Dhamma progresses; one who hates or detests the Dhamma declines'. And the devi agrees. She just repeats what he said.

Then the second verse. Here Hare says: 'Who hath bad men as friends, Nor maketh friends with good, Who chooses bad men's ways: A source of suffering that'. Chalmers says: 'The second failure's he who loves the bad, courts not the good, and favours bad men's creeds'. And Saddhatissa says: 'One who loves the company of the vicious finds no delight with the virtuous; he prefers the company of the ignorant and misguided this is a cause of one's downfall'.

So the general sense is clear, but let's go into it a little more specifically. Asant' assa piya honti, sante na kurute piyam. So asant and sant that is 'the not-good' and 'the good', literally. The sant is the good person, even I don't know if there is an etymological connection the saintly person, though saintly has got perhaps the wrong sort of connotations for us. The word for 'love' here is piya, the same as the Sanskrit priya. In Pali piya is usually distinguished from metta. Metta is always positive, so to speak; piya tends to be more negative. Piya in the Dhammapada is decidedly negative; it's translated as 'affection' and is regarded as a hindrance and an obstacle. It's attachment, attachment through one's feelings. It's what shall I say almost neurotic attachment, neurotic dependence. But here it doesn't seem to mean that. It's just 'love', 'affection', in an ordinary sort of way. So one could perhaps just translate it as 'love' in the ordinary sense almost. So ... (Long Pause)

Kurute is a word I'm not sure of. I'll look it up in the dictionary. (Long Pause) Yes. 'He to whom the bad are dear', one could say. The prefix ku usually means something negative. [So] it means something like: 'he who has a bad love for the good', that is to say who doesn't love the good, and 'he who delights in a false Dhamma' an unreal Dhamma; asatam is more like 'unreal'. Hare translates it as 'Who hath bad men as friends'. Or 'he to whom the not-good are dear' that's the more literal translation. 'He to who the not-good are dear and to whom the good are not dear, and who delights in' Hare translates it: 'bad men's ways'. 'Dhamma' is not just 'truth' or 'principle' in the abstract, [20] but also a way of life. So one could say: 'bad men's ways'. One could paraphrase it like that. So 'this is a source of downfall'.

One could translate it in this way: 'To be friendly with the bad, to be unfriendly with the good, and to delight in a bad ideology' ideology covers both the theoretical and the practical 'this is a source of downfall'. So here clearly what is being referred to is kalyana mitrata and its opposite, with the addition of a sort of involvement in a false philosophy, almost. Not merely that you are avoiding association with the good and associating with the bad or the not-good, not just that, but that you're involved in a wrong ideology at the same time, that you're involved in micchaditthis.

What does Saddhatissa say? He paraphrases very much. 'One who loves the company of the vicious'. It doesn't say anything about 'company'. 'Vicious' is much too strong, because the actual Pali word is 'the not-good'. 'And finds no delight with the virtuous' he doesn't like the virtuous. Asatam dhammam roceti: 'prefers the doctrine of the ignorant and misguided' no, it's asatam: 'of those who are not-good', or 'of that which is unreal' roceti: 'takes delight in'. So,

'he who takes delight in an unreal Dhamma', or 'takes delight in the Dhamma, the philosophy, the way of life, of those who are not good, not real, not true'. It means all those things. (Pause)

So in what way, could one say, does this verse follow on from the previous one? You could say 'the good' represents those in whom the Dharma is embodied or at least reflected, whereas 'the not-good' represent those in whom the Dharma is not reflected, in fact those in whom that which is against the Dharma a false Dharma, to use that expression is embodied or reflected. So if you loved the Dharma it would be only natural that you associated with those who embodied the Dharma. And if you disliked the Dharma you would not associate with those who embodied the Dharma; you would not like them. You would be all the more likely to take delight in some false philosophy.

So one could say that this is another characteristic of those who love the Dhamma. This is another way of discovering who loves the Dhamma. If you love the Dhamma you will associate with those who are embodiments of the Dhamma, or with those in whom the Dhamma is reflected, those in whose lives, or at least in whose interests, the Dhamma is reflected. So one might say this is what kalyana mitrata really means. It doesn't mean that you develop a friendship with someone who happens to be involved with the Dhamma. You develop your friendship with him, at least partly, at least to a great extent, because he is involved with the Dhamma. Your primary consideration is you see the Dhamma embodied in him or reflected in him, and it is that which draws you to him. It's that which forms the basis of the friendship or the relationship, even though maybe at the same time you like him on a purely personal level, in a purely personal way. It seems that, at least at first, there has to be at least an element of that personal liking before even the [21] Dharmic relationship can develop.

So I think one has to ask oneself, one has to distinguish between the genuine kalyana mitrata and the false kalyana mitrata. Because someone is involved with the Dhamma and you are involved with the Dhamma, it does not necessarily follow that your friendship is a spiritual friendship or a kalyana mitrata. Do you see what I mean? It's only a kalyana mitrata if the Dhamma is the basis or the principal element in the friendship.

You might find that, say, if you form a friendship or a relationship with a woman who is also interested in the Dhamma. But the basis of your relationship is not your mutual interest in the Dhamma; it's probably something else. So therefore your friendship or relationship with her doesn't count as kalyana mitrata.

Sumitra: That would be handy! (Laughter)

S: It's the same if the friendship is with a man. Even though you're interested in the Dharma, he's interested in the Dharma, but the main basis of your friendship is you go to the pub together, or you go and see films together if that is the main thing in your friendship, even though you're both independently or separately interested in the Dharma, your friendship is not therefore a kalyana mitrata, because your common interest in the Dharma, though there is a common interest, is not the basis of, or the main element in, the friendship. (Pause)

I'd say that doesn't usually happen in the case of men. If you are friends in an ordinary sort of way the Dharmic element will come into it sooner or later if you both have that interest in the Dharma just because if you're friendly with someone you like to talk with him about whatever

you are really interested in.

Again, I was reading something in the Sufis which was quite interesting. In Sufism, as in Islam generally, they distinguish between ruh and nafs. Anyone familiar with this? Ruh is more like 'spirit', or you can even perhaps translate it as 'soul'. It's the higher part of man. And nafs is the lower part of man, the passional nature. It's not considered negatively in Islam, or in Sufism for that matter, but it's certainly lower. You could say it's the liver as opposed to the heart, symbolically speaking the heart symbolizing ruh. So you get the nature of the distinction? One particular Sufi Master says that in relating to women one has to be very careful; but they don't exclude relationships with women altogether, necessarily, because Islam itself doesn't. But the Sufi Master says, in relating to women, having a relationship with a woman, you have to be very careful, because, he says, in the case of a relationship with a woman it's your nafs relating to her nafs. He says you cannot safely have a relationship with a woman - from the Sufi point of view unless your own nafs is definitely subordinated to your own ruh. If your nafs is subordinated to your ruh then you can, with impunity as it were, have a relationship with a woman; that is to say, you can allow [22] your nafs to relate to her nafs. But if your nafs is not subordinated to your ruh, you should not do so. Do you see the point? So a relationship of nafs with nafs (Laughter) is not a spiritual friendship. It's only a relationship of ruh with ruh which forms the basis for what we call spiritual friendship or kalyana mitrata.

End of Cassette One, Side Two

Cassette Two, Side One

S: ... that is to say, the common interest in the Dharma, or common devotion to the Dharma, must be actually operative in the friendship itself; it mustn't be in the background or in abeyance. It must be very much in the forefront of the friendship, otherwise it doesn't count as a spiritual friendship. (Long Pause)

Sumitra: What was the source of the information about the Sufis? You've made two references ...

S: Ah, let me think. The first was a reference to ibn 'Arabi 1; and the other was to a Sufi called Suhrawardi 2. I don't remember the whole name. They've both got very long names. One is generally known as ibn 'Arabi. He was born in Spain and the other is generally known as Suhrawardi.

Sumitra: I wondered if that might have occurred in a book that you were reading.

S: Well, I did read the pieces; I didn't hear them from anybody. There is reason to believe that Sufism, especially Central Asian Sufism, was to some extent influenced by Buddhism, that is to say, Mahayana Buddhism. Some Sufis, for instance, wear 'patched cloaks' that's how it's translated. I don't know what it is in Arabic or Persian but it translates into English as 'patched cloaks'. And they wander from place to place; they're mendicants. And there are, as it were, Sufi viharas they call them khanqahs, 'spiritual communities' that is to say, for men only, which is rather well, in a way against the general Islamic tradition. They recognize the possibility of celibacy, which exoteric Islam doesn't really recognize. (Long Pause)

So it's as though kalyana mitrata is very directly related to this love of the Dharma; because it's as though you

[note:

(1) Muhyiuddin Muhammad Ibn al'Arabi (1165 - 1240), Spanish-born author of Fusus alhikam: The Bezels of Wisdom

(2) Either Diya addin Abu Najib as Suhrawardi (1097 - 1168), author of Adab almuridin: The Manners of the Adepts, or his nephew Shihab addin AbuHafs 'Umar as Suhrawardi (1145 - 1234), author of 'Awarif alma'arif. Considered joint founders of the Suhrawardiyya school.]

[23]
actually discover the Dharma which you love in more concrete form in those who are actually practising it. Do you see what I mean? You're not satisfied with just thinking about it or having it as an abstract idea, not satisfied with just reading about it. You want to come into contact with people who are actually themselves involved with it and, as I said, embody or at least reflect it to some extent. And you become emotionally involved with them in a highly positive way. And that leads to the development of spiritual friendship, kalyana mitrata. So that also suggests [that] if you're having difficulty developing kalyana mitrata it could be because you don't love the Dharma enough.

Sumitra: Or that the person you're trying to do it with doesn't embody the Dharma enough.

S: Yes! Or you're not in contact with anybody who embodies it sufficiently for you or obviously enough for you to be able to relate to them on that basis. I mean, supposing you have someone who is, say, technically your kalyana mitrata supposing you're a Mitra. But supposing he's always playing football. When you go to see him, he just wants to talk about football scores. Well, he may be devoted to the Dharma separately, as it were, outside his relationship with you, but that doesn't come to the forefront. You're not able to relate to that element in him. So for you it isn't a relationship of kalyana mitrata. (Pause)

Or, in some instances, that element may actually be lacking; so there's nothing for you to relate to. But usually if you do love the Dharma which means you have some sensitivity to Dharma you'll feel the presence of the Dharma in some other person and naturally want to communicate with them about it. And on the basis of that develop a friendship with them. It's not as though you're sort of officially assigned a kalyana mitra. (Pause)

There's a saying by one of the modern Hindu mystics that two drunkards always become friends. (Laughter) So, he says, in the same way, those who are so to speak drinking the wine of spiritual life, they will also surely become friends; just as two drunkards like to drink together, so, in the same way, two people who are involved with the spiritual life like to associate together on that basis. (Pause) Of course, it doesn't necessarily mean discussing the Abhidhamma. Well, discussion of the Abhidhamma is not excluded, but it needs to be something more real, more alive, than just theoretical discussion. (Pause)

So there is this third clause: that is 'delighting in the Dhamma', whether the philosophy, the

principle, the way of life, of those who are not good. It's as though one can't keep the mind a void, a blank. If you're not associating with the good to use that term if you're not cultivating kalyana mitrata, if you're associating only with those who are not good, if you're developing, let us say, unspiritual friendship, it won't just stop there. You'll also take delight in wrong philosophies or wrong ways of life. You'll develop an ideology, a philosophy, a rationalization of downfall. This is [24] what these sorts of Dharmas, these sorts of principles or ways of life really represent.

Prajnananda: Because you're in company that appreciates or relishes those points of view.

S: Or company that is itself an embodiment of that tendency to downfall or deterioration. It will have its philosophy of deterioration, as it were; making out deterioration, or what you regard as serious deterioration, to be a good thing. One could mention so many forms of what I sometimes call 'pseudo-liberalism'. These are really philosophies of, or rationalizations of, different aspects of downfall.

Sumitra: Could you give just one or two examples of that? Because I've heard that phrase before 'pseudo-liberalism' and it's got to the stage now where I don't know whatever it referred to in the first place.

S: To give a few simple examples: one is, say, that everybody is equal. And you push this to the logical conclusion, even the extreme conclusion: that everybody has to be treated in exactly the same way. You deny differences, even from a practical point of view. You deny there's any possibility of discriminating, say, better or worse, or more developed or less developed.

Another example is one I came across in the paper: some people are campaigning for the abolition of caning in schools. I regard this as tending in the direction of pseudo-liberalism. (Amusement) Someone, I think it was Subhuti, was talking to a teacher not so long ago I think it was Hridaya and saying that it was becoming virtually impossible to teach, because you couldn't control the class. You sometimes couldn't even protect yourself from violence because that sanction had been removed. So there's all sorts of people around who aren't having to teach, who aren't having to control an unruly class, who are not themselves in danger of being attacked, but who are campaigning for the abolition of the use of the cane under all circumstances under no circumstances can any kind of physical punishment ever be inflicted on a child however he behaves. Well, this is pseudo-liberalism, I think, this sort of tendency. Of course the cane should not be used excessively; of course it should not be used in such a way as to cause real pain and real harm; of course it should not be used lightly. But as a last resort, it would seem if you want to have an educational system at all, you have to have it.

Another form of pseudo-liberalism is in connection with women's liberation and so on. That's probably not even pseudo-liberalism; that goes far beyond even pseudo-liberalism. There's a bit of a take-off about this. There's a new edition of Roget's Thesaurus with all the sexist words removed. Have you seen the reviews of this? (Voices: No.) It's astonishing when you think of it. For instance, 'countryman' has been deleted and 'country-dweller' has been put in its place. So someone did a sort of skit on this in the paper the other day [25] and said, well, we mustn't talk about Man and Superman; it's Person and Superperson. (Laughter) And there's this famous line of Pope: 'The proper study of mankind is man.' Well, this should be:

'The proper study of humankind is person.' Because 'mankind' has been removed from the Thesaurus and 'humankind' has been put in. And then there's this famous refrain of Burns': 'A man's a man for a' that'; 'A person's a person for a' that.' You see? So you run a bit mad by pushing these sorts of liberal principles to extremes. You become what I call pseudo-liberal. You get the idea?

Sumitra: Yes I do.

Chris Harper: So pseudo-liberalism is an ideology which looks as though it's got a taste of freedom, perhaps, in the mundane sense, but actually hasn't at all; in fact may even be a hindrance.

S: Yes. There's not only pseudo-liberalism, there are all sorts of other micchaditthis that it's not easy to find a generic term for. For instance, there are micchaditthis like presenting something as having happened to you, presenting yourself as the victim, when in fact you've done something. I gave an example: If someone says: 'I couldn't get up for meditation this morning because I had to go to the cinema last night.' (Laughter) Well, it wasn't that you had to go to the cinema; you decided to go to the cinema, knowing full well that if you went, and therefore came home late, you would not be able to get up early the following morning for meditation. But you try to present yourself as the victim of the situation: 'It's not my fault that I couldn't get up for meditation this morning; I had to go to the cinema last night.' As though you did not have any choice in the matter! So very often one says: 'I have to do something.' Or: 'I've got to go and see my mother.' Well, you haven't got to; you've decided to. Do you see what I mean? Only too often people say that they had to do something when they really mean that they decided to do it. But they don't want to admit their responsibility, because then it might become more obvious that they should not be doing that thing. So they represent themselves as victims of the situation. This is another sort of micchaditthi.

Sumitra: I'd like to come back for just a moment to the process of kalyana mitrata: that by associating with the good, with those involved with the Dharma, you evolve; by associating with the unskilful, you degenerate. I can think in my own case and I think this is probably true of a lot of people that I've actually passed through stages where I've been in contact with people who you could say were on a downward path. So I've passed through that; but I've been in very close contact with them. So what was it that prevented me and other people being sort of caught up in that current? And in fact swimming against it to the point at which you meet the Dharma.

[26]
S: Well, some traditional Buddhists would say it's something carried over from previous lives. Well, that may be so; it may be not. But the fact remains: that there is something in you with which you are as it were naturally endowed, which is leading you or guiding you in a certain direction. And on account of which you do not succumb to certain situations which perhaps other people do succumb to. One can feel that within oneself sometimes in some situations: a definite element, a definite force, a definite tendency, leading you in a certain direction though at the time perhaps you can't recognize the direction, or even recognize it as a direction. It's only when you encounter what you were, so to speak, looking for, that you realize: Yes, this is what I was looking for; I was actually looking for this without realizing it.

Sumitra: The other point about that: I've personally come across quite a number of people

who are quite cynical about the idea of spiritual development, but in a sense on quite a good basis, in that everything that they've seen i.e. people like Rajneesh, TM, and all these different kinds of spiritual movements in some ways they don't ring true. They recognize this, but that sort of learning process is carried over [to all notions of spiritual development].

S: I don't think that necessarily makes you cynical. I don't think it has to make you cynical. I think cynicism is still something other; because I myself have encountered plenty of that sort of thing, maybe nobody more, but it hasn't made me cynical. It never made me cynical. So what is the difference? What is it that really makes one cynical?

Sumitra: It's like you can have an honest disregard ...

S: Or an honest what shall I say? Well, if you do see through certain people's pretensions well, in a way you're sorry for that. It gives you no pleasure. Whereas I think in the case of cynicism you get a sort of satisfaction out of it, as if to say: 'I told you so!'

Sumitra: Right, yes.

S: Whereas you can see through the limitations and the pretensions - that some people are maybe not all that they're supposed to be - without it making you cynical.

Sumitra: I suppose in some senses that's something that we have to guard against actually: being cynical in those areas. 'Cause like it does seem it really is quite deeply in-grained in the present standards of communication.

S: I think that we should be very careful not to allow ourselves to be cynical; even cynical about, say, politicians. It's very easy to dismiss all politicians as well, the sort of things that people usually say and to be just very cynical about them. But that is not necessarily always true. Even if one is justified in believing that politicians are not wholly sincere, do not always live up to their own professions, this should not necessarily make one cynical. One could just be disillusioned or a bit regretful that people can behave in [27] that sort of way. That's quite different from being cynical.

Kulananda: In a sense there's always a certain delight in that sort of cynicism, isn't there?

S: Yes. (Pause)

Chris Harper: If you're being cynical about something, it puts you yourself on a stand above them, as it were. It implies that you're above all that. (S: Yes, right.) It's almost like a projection of your own mental state perhaps. I wanted to ask about something more about pseudo-liberalism. Thinking about people that have a dislike of the Dharma, or perhaps are just scared of the Dharma for some reason; perhaps they invest their energy in some kind of pseudo-liberalism, some project like 'Saving the Seals' or whatever, because they want to invest their energy into something that looks good, feels good to them, but is actually quite mundane. Do you see what I mean? They don't really want to invest it in something that really is quite ...

S: I had another experience years ago when I was in India. I was travelling by train. I happened to meet someone who was running a leprosarium, that is to say a place where

leprosy patients were kept and treated. And he really started getting at me because I wasn't involved in that kind of work. I explained that I was working among the ex-Untouchables in Maharashtra. Well, working among ex-Untouchables just didn't count so far as he was concerned. It was as though the only worthwhile thing to do was to work for lepers.

There's a sort of narrowness here, a rigidity: that only the thing that you are doing is any good. So in the same way some people in this country [seem to feel that] if you're really sincere you ought to be working to improve race relations. That's where it's really at. Or nuclear disarmament. They don't seem to recognize that there are so many causes in the world and the individual has to select or choose the cause that he considers most important, at least for him. (Pause)

So one could say coming back to the verse that these wrong ideologies or these false philosophies of various kinds reinforce the tendency to downfall, to deterioration. They are in fact, in effect, philosophies of downfall and they facilitate your downfall.

Kulananda: They're often quite subtle and quite closely related; they [can] seem to be akin to the Dharma especially.

S: Yes. Like a near-enemy sometimes. (Pause)

Kulananda: They can even be quite alive in Buddhist circles. It's not as if they're actually that antithetical ...

S: No, they can be very insidious. There's another: there's a sort of pseudo-democracy [that says] that everybody has to have a voice, everybody has to [28] have a vote, even in areas where they may be totally incompetent.

Kulananda: I'm sure that there are people who believe that women ought to be allowed into Sukhavati. Even in the FWBO.

S: I'm sure there must be a few such misguided people who don't believe in men's communities. I think some of the women don't believe in them. They don't mind women's communities but they don't really like I think in some cases that there should be men's communities, that is to say places which they define as places from which they are excluded. (Pause)

Kulananda: So it's not always that easy to discern the Dharma from its near-enemies.

S: No. One needs a certain clarity of mind, a certain freedom from one's baser passions sometimes.

Kulananda: And also one needs to have had certain experiences to a certain extent perhaps ...

S: Perhaps. I think sometimes that clarity of mind is enough: clear thinking, straight thinking. One other thing I'll mention: an example I found in the Newsletter in a heading which said: 'People or Profits?' So what is the suggestion there?

Prajnananda: That you can't have both together.

S: You can't have both together; you have to choose.

Prajnananda: That ethical work can't be profitable.

S: Yes. So, obviously, people do matter. One can't deny that ethical values matter. So therefore the assumption is that profit can be disregarded; it doesn't matter. If everyone's happy in a certain situation that's all that really matters. If everyone's comfortable, that's all right; the situation is ok doesn't matter if they're not making money.

Sumitra: What are the answers?

S: (Interrupting) Some people I know believe this. I think it's more among the women than the men actually. But some of them do seem to believe this. I don't say the author of the article believed that. But that is the assumption behind that title if one takes it quite literally. Actually, the article doesn't quite say that. But the headline certainly does at least suggest that. After all, it is the heading. So somebody opening the Newsletter at that particular article would get that sort of impression if they didn't know the FWBO: that it's a question of people or profits; you can't have both. Clearly, you mustn't sacrifice people so it must be profits. Since it's all about coops well, coops can't really be profitable. You've got to run at a loss. But so long [29] as everyone's happy, it doesn't matter.

Mike Howes: '[As long as] you're communicating well!'

S: '[As long as] you're communicating well!' (Laughter)

Kulananda: When I said that you need a certain experience, I was trying to think: Well, how would you communicate the value of men's communities, for example, to people who've not had any experience of what it is like to live in a men's community? Very difficult.

Sumitra: Impossible. Until ...

S: You could communicate it by virtue of the fact that all of you living in a men's community just seem so happy and positive. That could make people think. If you're all miserable and woe-begone, well, (Laughter) they would be justified in drawing the conclusion that single-sex communities weren't a particularly good situation!

Kulananda: Frustrated and machismo! (Pause)

S: I think also [that] men's communities without very strong kalyana mitrata are men's communities only in name. I think that is very important. I talked about that a bit with the community here.

Kulananda: And for kalyana mitrata there has to be this love of the Dharma.

S: Yes, yes. That must be the common element, that must be the common basis. It must really be a spiritual community.

Kulananda: So there again that would really imply there has to be the connection with something like the Centre. You couldn't just have a community and work, for example,

because we've just seen work doesn't provide inspiration. And we've seen that a community without inspiration again isn't a spiritual community. So there's got to be the third element.

S: Well, the community could be still quite self-contained. It could have its own daily meditation and puja. It could have its own Dhamma study classes. The community could even invite people in for a meal: to meet them and talk to them seriously. One could do things in that way rather than through classes.

Dharmananda: We do this a lot at Arunachala. [Men's community in Bethnal Green where workers in Windhorse Trading lived.]

S: But clearly it takes time and energy to build up friendships within the community. People must really want to do it.

Kulananda: You see what people want to do through what they [actually] do.

[30]
S: Yes! I have said that I do believe that in the long run people always do what they really want to do. But they may rationalize it. I was talking to Sukhavati community about the fact that people always use the right sort of language, the right sort of terminology, to describe not to say dress-up what they're actually doing.

I caught out quite a few people this way. (Laughter) They know that within the FWBO 'self-development' is what it's all about. So if you can present what you want to do as 'good for your development' then you can get away with it. So people do actually do this sometimes. They say: 'I'm going to do such-and-such' even though they know that normally they wouldn't be approved of for doing it 'because I really think it's good for my development.' Like being lazy: 'I think it's necessary for my development!' Or: 'I need to be a bit distracted; I think that'll be good for my development!' (Laughter) You can probably think of further examples.

But it's justified to the group because they see it as a group, not as a spiritual community as 'good for my development'. Then they feel they can get away with it. They may not consciously do this; they may not deliberately do it; but this is in fact what happens. (Pause) In that way there's nothing that can't be described or justified as 'good for one's development'. So in the end, the ideal of personal development becomes a word, nothing more. You're just doing what you want to do. So again it becomes more important than ever just to be in contact with real spiritual friends who can sometimes see you and your needs more objectively and more truly than you can see them yourself, and who can counteract any such rationalizations on your part. (Long Pause)

Is there any further point about kalyana mitrata? Because if there isn't, I think we'll call it a day. I would have thought there was more to say, but maybe it's all been said. You've got Mitratas on it and so on.

Kulananda: What I find difficult is: how can you generate kalyana mitrata when it's not there, when it's not immediately present, when you don't actually have a strong feeling for another person? How can you actually go about it? Say, for example, you see somebody who has a particular need, who you can see is quite committed at base, but they're just going about things in the wrong way. You don't, though, have that strong communication with them, an

on-going kalyana mitrata relationship with them. You can't approach them except on that basis. But there isn't the seed of that obviously present. I don't know how you cultivate it. That worries me a lot.

S: It does seem that at the beginning at least for kalyana mitrata to develop between two people it is necessary that there should be not only the common Dharmic interest or element quite prominent, quite to the fore, in both cases, but also a personal liking.

I think when you've known someone for some time over a period of years you can develop a genuine liking for them on the basis of your purely Dharma friendship, even though you may not feel much of a sort of natural attraction to them.

[31]
This takes a lot of time. But I think if you want to develop a relationship of kalyana mitrata with someone a little more quickly than that, I think it isn't enough to have the common Dharmic interest. There has to be some mutual liking also in the ordinary sense as well. It's as though it's difficult for your relationship to thrive on the comparatively bleak diet just of the Dharma. (Kulananda: Right.) There's got to be something in common: mutual liking in a more human sort of sense. It's just a question of following a middle way. If you're relating too narrowly on the basis of the Dharma perhaps you won't develop kalyana mitrata at all. But if you're relating to someone who's without any element of the Dharma, then also you won't develop kalyana mitrata. It's as though to begin with at least both things have to be there: the common interest in the Dharma, common devotion to the Dharma, but also a certain amount of natural, mutual liking. Do you see what I mean?

It isn't enough to think: 'Oh he's a very worthy person, a very admirable person.' You've actually got to like that person [and] feel drawn to him, just as a person quite apart from the Dharmic element, even though at the same time, yes, you are attracted by that common Dharmic element. So I'd say, assuming that everybody in a spiritual community has got a Dharmic interest and there's a common Dharmic basis, well, you start off developing kalyana mitrata with the people that you just happen to like most amongst all those who may, more or less, be equally committed. You follow the line of least resistance here, I think. (Pause)

Mike Howes: One thing that I seem to have learnt while I've been around is that friendship is a long time coming; it's a slow process. Presumably then kalyana mitrata is a slow process really?

S: Oh yes. It's slow inasmuch as it's a form of friendship.

Mike Howes: Right. I suppose I've been around really seriously for about a year; I'm beginning to feel the beginnings of those friendships, but nothing really substantial, and I guess patience is really all that you can practise ... You can't force it.

S: Well, friendship can develop reasonably quickly, but I think spiritual friendship takes even longer. And at least you have to have regular contact. If the personnel of a community or a Centre is changing all the time there's no opportunity of developing friendships. You need to stick around with one another for a few years for anything worthwhile to develop. It's not like falling in love and having one whole gamut of the experience within a week or so. No, it doesn't work like that in the case of friendship. You've got to see someone regularly, maybe

live with them, work with them, study with them, meditate with them, and so on. And work on the relationship. Give it a bit of time, thought, trouble. Nurture it. Or at least make sure that opportunities for its development are provided.

[32]
You can't go about developing it in too sort of self-conscious or artificial a fashion; some people fail because they actually do that. They sort of grab you and say: 'Well, come on; we've got to have some kalyana mitrata' and might put you right off. (Laughter) It's a bit more subtle than that. That's a sort of spiritual rape attempted rape, because you can't really have rape on this level.

Kulananda: I was also thinking that to a certain extent you can't really criticize people except on a basis of kalyana mitrata.

S: I was talking to someone about this today and I said that I thought [that] if criticism was offered on a basis of real positivity it would almost never be rejected. But I have seen, even fairly recently, instances where someone offers some criticism [and] does it in a rather unskilful way, rather a harsh way, without much of positive feeling. Therefore that criticism is not accepted. And the first person then makes matters worse by then accusing the other person of 'lack of receptivity', 'lack of openness', and ends up by questioning his commitment which is absolutely unskilful. I've actually seen or heard this sort of thing ...

End of Cassette Two, Side One

Cassette Two, Side Two

S: ... criticism, which you feel is a perfectly valid criticism, you should not at once start thinking, at once start concluding, that they're 'resistant', they're very 'blocked', they're 'not open to you'. Ask yourself: 'Well, have I really put it in the best possible way? Have I really made that criticism on the basis of positivity?' Not just repeat the criticism more forcibly than ever, which is what sometimes people do.

Kulananda: I must say I find it very hard to find the kind of patience necessary to deal with this. I just want to be getting on with things. It's as if you have an ideal and you're quite impatient to have that ideal worked out. You know things could be so much better; you just want them to be.

S: I think you have to be careful that you are actually communicating inspiration to people, and not giving the impression that you're merely ordering them around, not to say kicking them around. Otherwise they'll react accordingly. They won't feel your positivity and inspiration or they won't feel them as such; they'll feel them as something else.

Sumitra: Presumably also part of the ideal that you're working towards is the development of patience. So that to be impatient isn't ...

Kulananda: I'll work on that next year! (Laughter)

[33]
S: But I have sometimes been surprised by people's lack of I won't say patience, but a sort of, even, sympathy with other people. Sometimes people are very hard on other people, very harsh, even unsympathetic; don't feel for them very much. I notice this even within the Friends unfortunately.

Kulananda: Strange how even one's idealism, which is perhaps a sense of the real value of one's ideals, can drive one to that position.

S: Yes, I think one has to be very careful that one's idealism doesn't develop into a sort of fanaticism, or doesn't develop a sort of fanatical edge to it. Because, at least from a Buddhist point of view, this is completely a contradiction in terms.

Kulananda: I suppose that's where patience comes in.

S: Yes. Patience prevents your idealism - even when it is genuine - from developing that sort of edge to it. (Pause) And the fact that you are right does not give you the right to bully people or to order people around.

Kulananda: Right. But then one's also got to be careful one doesn't fall into a sort of pseudo-liberalism.

S: Yes, yes. I mean the fact that there is such a thing as positive critical feedback means that there is such a thing as criticism. It's not that you're so positive that you couldn't possibly criticize anybody. That's going for the other extreme. You've got to have both. You've got to be critical and at the same time genuinely positive. And that isn't easy to achieve.

Kulananda: Perhaps you could say you shouldn't criticize until you really think you've seen the other person in something of his entirety.

S: Well, not only seen them, but developed some feeling for them. I think it's really dangerous and probably counter-productive, both for oneself and the other person, to criticize in the absence of genuine, quite warm feelings for the other person. You should criticize because you care, not because you want to get something off your chest. Only too often one gets that impression with people. They're not criticizing out of real care for the other person, but just because they get a kick out of criticizing. They get some kind of negative satisfaction. They're satisfied perhaps with a feeling of self-righteousness, superiority.

It isn't easy to criticize in a genuinely friendly way. ell, if you do, criticism almost ceases to be criticism in a negative sense. And people find it very easy to accept. It's just more like friendly advice. People feel that caringness coming across. They feel that you care about them and that's why you're speaking as you are. If they don't feel that, they just feel the edge of the criticism. They feel it as something [34] hostile, something negative, something destructive. And perhaps it is, if you don't have that feeling of caring for the person that you're criticizing.

Dharmananda: Do you think perhaps in the fourth stage of the metta bhavana you could, as part of the vehicle of developing metta, envisage oneself offering positive criticism to the enemy for all the things about them that ... ?

S: Well, I'd say if you looked after the metta, the criticism would look after itself. You can just imagine: supposing someone has done something [and] they haven't done it in quite the right way. You can say, rather sharply: 'That's not the way to do it!' and upset them. Or you can say really nicely: 'That's not the way to do it.' Or you can say: 'Come on, you can do it better than that.' sort of encouragingly. Or you can be really unpleasant and say: 'I don't know why you always do it in that way.' They are all different possible responses. (Pause)

Kulananda: It does seem very much to be a problem of wilfulness. That seems to give rise to this negative criticism very often.

S: Well, it's a sort of persistence in or a pushing forward of your point of view because it's your point of view. You're more concerned with rightness, your rightness, than with a genuine feeling for the other person or a sensitivity to the other person's position.

Kulananda: It's sometimes a kind of misplaced pragmatism. You're trying to get things done, and you need cooperation to get things done. You're forcing yourself, and you try to force the situation and you become very blunt.

S: Yes, right. It's as though you think: 'Well, I'm not sparing myself; why should I spare other people?' Or: 'Why should other people spare themselves?' It's as though if you're not sparing yourself you [feel you] have a right to expect that others should not spare themselves; and therefore a right to insist that they don't spare themselves; and therefore a right to make them not spare themselves by whatsoever means. (Pause)

Anyway, let's leave it there, shall we? We've only done two verses, but never mind, we'll do all the others. There's twelve or thirteen, I think. I think some are simpler than others.

But the point which has come up most strongly this evening, I think, has been the importance of emotion, positive emotion both in relation to the Dharma and in relation to one's friends, and especially spiritual friends. (Pause) Anyway, you can all go back to your community and love one another! (Laughter) It's no doubt what you're doing all the time anyway. (Laughter)

End of Cassette Two, Side Two

Parabhava Sutta: Cassette Three, Side One

SESSION TWO

S: Right, we'll go on from where we left off rather sleepily last night. I'll just dictate to you the translation I came up with of the first two verses, or the first two declines or declensions, I should say. I haven't translated the introductory bit or the question. So, one:

Growth is easily understood.
Decline is easily understood.
He who is enamoured of the Dhamma grows.
He who detests the Dhamma declines.'

How do you like that? It's different from 'He who loves the Dhamma,' isn't it? I think it is the better word: more appropriate, more expressive. I'm not happy with the word 'decline', but I

don't know that we have a better one.

Sumitra: 'Degenerates'?

S: Yes, one could say 'degenerates'.

Chris Harper: 'Falls back'?

S: 'Falls back', 'falls down', 'suffers downfall', I've thought of all those possibilities 'deteriorates', 'degenerates'. You can please yourself. But it is the antithesis of growth. Then the second verse:

Evil men are dear to him;
Good men are not dear to him.
He delights in the ideology of evil men.
This is a cause of one's decline.'

I'll give you my provisional translation of verse three, then we can go on to that.

Being one who is addicted to sleep,
Addicted to company, unaroused (in energy),
Lazy, and known for irascibility.
This is a cause of one's decline.'

'This is a cause of one's downfall'. That's the refrain: tam parabhavato mukham in Pali. If you want to get the sound of it [the whole verse] goes like this: Niddasili sabhasili anutthata ca yo naro alaso kodhapano, tam parabhavato mukham. So there is a definite rhythm, a definite metre, isn't there?

Mike Howes: Is Pali quite a poetic language? Tuneful?

S: Pali is euphonious, one could say, inasmuch as consonants and vowels are pretty much evenly balanced, whereas in English there tends to be a preponderance of consonants. In Italian there are proportionately more vowels to consonants than in English. That's why Italian sounds more euphonious than English does. If you've got clusters of consonants which are difficult to mouth at least for the foreigner it does make the language a little harsh and a little stiff. Pali is probably more euphonious than Sanskrit. Sanskrit has lots of compound consonants, which you don't get so many of in Pali.

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For instance, in Pali you have bhikkhu, whereas in Sanskrit bhiksu; instead of khu, it's ksu. Instead of dhamma, it's dharma. You've got an extra consonant each time.

All right, let's go into this verse then. But first of all one notices something: in the first two verses the alternatives are spelled out, aren't they? In the first verse you've got growth as opposed to decline. And then you've got evil men and association with evil men as opposed to good men and non-association with good men. So in each verse the alternatives are indicated, both for the upward path and the downward path. But from verse three we're only concerned with the downward path, only with decline only with the negative spiral, as we might call it.

So, Niddasili sabhasala anutthata ca yo naro 'being one who is addicted to sleep, addicted to company, unaroused,' and then also 'lazy' kodhapaano 'known for irascibility' tam parabhavato mukham 'this is a cause of one's decline.' Let's see what the other translations say.

Hare is pretty accurate: 'When man loves company/ And sleep, when he is lax/ And slack, and known for wrath:/ A source of suffering that.' Then Chalmers says: 'Third comes the critic, lazy, indolent, and sleek; his constant carping mark him out.' We'll go into the reasons for that translation in a minute. And then Sadhatissa says: 'Being fond of sleep, talkative, lazy, and irritable this is a cause of one's downfall.' He doesn't say anything about being un-aroused. He seems to miss that. And he has 'talkative' instead of 'addicted to company'. We'll see that is not all that accurate. Nidda is sleep. Sili: now this is in a way an interesting term. We're familiar with the term sila, aren't we? What does sila actually mean?

Prajnananda: 'Behaviour'.

S: You're pretty close, but we have to go back a step etymologically, so to speak ...

Prajnananda: 'Motivation'?

S: No.

Kulananda: 'Ethical activity'?

S: No, you're going forward.

Prajnananda: 'Drive'?

S: No. Actually sila means 'habit'. For instance, there is the expression adanasila. Adana is non-generosity or meanness. So adanasila is 'of the habit of non-generosity', being habitually ungenerous. So sila here means simply 'habit'. Then by extension it comes to mean moral habit, ethical habit, that is to say consistently ethical behaviour, the habitual performance of skilful actions.

So if you are niddasila, you are of sleepy habit, you're habitually sleepy, attached to sleep, - addicted to sleep, as [37] I render it. You're in the habit of sleep, both literal and metaphorical. It's not that you just sometimes sleep a lot; you habitually sleep a lot, you're given to sleep, addicted to sleep. I think that probably isn't too strong. Because to be habituated to something if it is unskilful and to be addicted to it is much the same.

Having clarified the word itself, has anyone got anything to say about it: this habit of sleep? In what way is it a cause of decline, downfall, regression, degeneration? What does it represent? Why do people become addicted to sleep?

Sumitra: It does actually mean physical sleep?

S: Well, as I said, it can be both literal and metaphorical. Let me take the literal meaning first: addicted actually to sleep, the suggestion being that you desire more sleep than actually you physically need. I think most people have had that experience at least from time to time. You've had your sleep; you've woken up; but you just turn over and go to sleep again or you

try to go to sleep again, you would like to go to sleep again. So perhaps somebody habitually does this. Perhaps he's in that sort of habit; perhaps he sleeps during the day; perhaps he's always just sort of lying around, dozing, snoozing. What does that represent?

Sumitra: It's a form of escapism.

Prajnananda: He doesn't want to be conscious.

Chris Harper: It means you have no motivation to really do anything.

S: Yes. What brings it about? How do people get into this state? Children aren't normally in this state, are they? In fact, they usually don't want to go to bed.

Kulananda: I think it's a form of fear.

S: In some cases it seems to be that one is afraid of the world into which you wake up, into which you'll have to emerge, out in which you're going to have to do something.

There's also perhaps a love of comfort, the warmth of the bed. It's cosy. I don't know whether one should be Freudian and say that it's womb-like, that it represents infantile regression, a desire to go back into the womb. But even if it doesn't in a strictly psycho-analytical sense, it certainly does in a sort of symbolic way. It's regressive. It is infantile. It suggests a lack of maturity, an unwillingness to grow up, an unwillingness to assert oneself, to meet challenges, to overcome obstacles, difficulties; absence of motive for so doing; lack of confidence; not being sure of oneself.

Kulananda: So it's a lack of masculinity?

S: You could say a lack of masculinity - using the term 'masculinity' metaphorically rather than literally. Otherwise [38] women wouldn't ever be able to get up in the morning!

Mike Howes: Could there be some link at all with the attraction one has to certain types of partly-conscious dreaming? I know sometimes when I'm addicted [to sleep] it's that wanting to stay there in this sort of world, perhaps, where you are supreme, or something like that. Sometimes it seems more attractive than the waking state ...

S: Well, again this is infantile and regressive, isn't it? It's the desire to dream, to spend one's time in the dream world instead of going out into the real world the 'real world' in a manner of speaking.

Kulananda: I find it partly positive, occasionally. Sometimes I get a bit out of touch with myself. I find that there are times when, having been a bit out of touch with myself, if I can make contact with my dreams, and perhaps sleep longer, and perhaps take a lot more care about getting up, that helps me to become more in touch.

S: But then that isn't the sort of thing that is covered by this text, which is definitely niddasili: 'one who is habituated to sleep'.

Sumitra: Yes, it does become a very difficult cycle to break. I've had that experience.

S: Well, clearly it's a cause of decline or downfall, because you're not making any effort.

Kulananda: It's just cyclic. To the extent that you don't make effort, to that extent there's more to overcome.

S: So, more specifically, you don't get up in the morning and meditate. You don't get on with the day's work, whatever that may happen to be.

Kulananda: It only gets worse.

S: Because the normal state of affairs is that when you wake up in the morning, when you open your eyes, you're fully conscious. You feel rested, you feel glad that it's a new day and you look forward to doing whatever you have to do during the day. And you quite happily get up to start doing it. That's normal.

So if one doesn't have that sort of experience every morning, that is what one should aim for. If one doesn't have that experience, I think one needs to examine one's situation, examine oneself, very closely, because you should, when you wake up in the morning, be very happy that it's a new day, that there are new things to do. I don't necessarily mean different things to do, but the day is new; it's not just another old day so everything you do is new. Even though you've done it before, you haven't done it that day - so in that sense it's new.

[39]
I don't know, but I rather suspect that when we were in Tuscany there was a greater tendency for people to wake up in that sort of way each morning. Yes? Don't disillusion me!

Several voices: Yes.

Sumitra: Well, one thing about that it strikes me looking at that because I sometimes get into the situation where I don't want to go to bed at night, because of the activities during the day. In Tuscany it was different because it was so regular. To go to bed at night was quite easy.

S: Well, that also was part of the day's work. So you were happy and ready to do it when the time came. You weren't hanging on to the experience of the evening thinking it was such a good evening you'd got to prolong it, because maybe you were having good evenings every day. So you quite happily accepted the fact that it was ten o'clock, or half past ten: time to go to bed so that you could get up in the morning; whereas the tendency sometimes is that we don't want to go to bed because either you're clinging on to what we are in fact enjoying, or we keep staying up in the hope that we may enjoy ourselves more than we actually are ... (Laughter) Well, isn't it so? You just won't give up and go to bed; you're sort of disappointed.

Sumitra: That's what children do. (S: Yes.)

Kulananda: And also sometimes people don't want to sleep and they don't want to dream. They want to stay distracted and they don't want to have to experience the lack of distraction.

Mike Howes: I can remember my first retreat at Padmaloka. I was excited by the prospect of going to bed and excited by getting up; it was such a good retreat. The night-time brought its excitement and the daytime. It was really good. (Pause)

S: Of course sleep is obviously very important. Objectively speaking, one should get enough; though perhaps sometimes we could do with less than we actually do get or do take. People don't all seem to have the same requirements, do they? Some seem to need more than others.

Prajnananda: I've found when retreats are going quite well, if meditation's going well, I tend to need less.

Mike Howes: Sleep is very easily tied into habit as well, though, isn't it? Habitually waking at [a certain time] .. 'Must have eight hours' ...

Kulananda: There are also seasonal factors. (S: Yes.) And regularity is absolutely essential.

S: I think the more regular the hours that you keep, the more easily you sleep. If you have, say, a regular bedtime, you can be pretty certain that you will sleep, and sleep properly. But [40] if you change about too much, especially as you get older, the fact that your sleep pattern has been disturbed may very likely mean you don't sleep properly. (Pause)

Kulananda: In some ways you should decide you're going to go to sleep in order that you wake up and meditate.

S: Yes. Which is a question of planning a whole positive routine and very happily fulfilling each part of it as it comes along. You're glad to get up. You're glad to clean your teeth. You're glad to sit and meditate. You're glad to have your breakfast. You're glad to go off to work. (Amusement) You look forward to every bit of it, enjoy every bit of it. It suggests, of course, that you don't do anything hastily. You don't gulp or swallow your breakfast, say, standing up with one eye on the clock. And you don't rush along so hastily to the Tube that you've no time to look at the trees in passing.

Kulananda: So you've got to think ahead.

Sumitra: How far do you think you can actually take that? 'Cause it can become almost dreamy; you're operating in a bit of a daze somehow.

S: When?

Sumitra: Well, how can I put it? I've found it quite useful myself to actually be operating on quite a tight basis that things that I do follow each other quite speedily.

S: Well, that's all right provided you remain mindful and aren't thinking of one thing while doing another. And don't have business lunches, for instance. (Laughter)

Kulananda: I think we'll just do away with lunches!

S: ... the hastily snatched sandwich while you discuss some business deal.

Sumitra: Oh dear! (More laughter)

S: One of my least favourite kinds of people are those who try to discuss serious matters with me while I'm eating. (Amusement)

Prajnananda: Do you mean you should set aside time for planning ahead and ... ?

S: No! Otherwise you have to set aside time for setting aside time ... (Laughter) No, what I'm really trying to say is that I think for most people a certain basic routine is conducive to stability and peace of mind. You can have variations on that routine -you can even break it or abandon it completely from time to time - but I think for much of the time you need a fairly definite regular lifestyle, however [41] different your lifestyle may be in other respects.

One's system functions like that, doesn't it? It's a system of regularities. And I think you can do things more easily and accomplish more if you get into the habit of regular working one way or another, rather than just doing things when you feel like them, or haphazardly. This is not to say that you should follow your routine pedantically; but let it supply a certain basic rhythm, as it were. Have variations on that; as I said, break it sometimes; disrupt it sometimes; but for a definite reason. Sometimes the reason may be that you simply feel like breaking your routine. It doesn't have to be a rational, logical sort of reason. You may just feel like kicking over the traces sometimes, taking a day off. You just feel like doing it changing your routine. (Pause)

So I think it's good if you can incorporate sleep into a routine, that you have regular hours for sleep unless once in a while you happen to see a late-night film, or something like that. And have regular hours for meals. I think that is quite important. I think this is one of the things that people appreciated in Tuscany that meal-times were very regular. And I think some people at least had not been having regular meals. (Pause)

So I think that if you sleep regularly, if your sleep is regular, if your meals are regular, and your meditation is regular, everything else will look after itself. That represents the basic rhythm apart from even more elementary functions which I won't actually mention that represents the basic pattern: regular hours of sleep; regular meals; regular meditation. Fit everything else into that pattern.

Mike Howes: Does it matter to what extent regularity is self-imposed, as [against] imposed from the outside? Meals in a community are typically at fixed times. I suppose ideally ..

S: But are they? Because you as a member of the community presumably discuss all the factors involved and you decide when meal-times are going to be. For instance, you have breakfast sufficiently late that you can get in a meditation beforehand, etc. And you have supper sufficiently early so that people can go to classes or go to a concert. It wouldn't be very convenient obviously to have supper at eight o'clock.

Mike Howes: I suppose what I was trying to say and maybe it's not a point but presumably ideally you get to know your own mechanism so well that if you find you need two meals a day, then that's what you have. If you need four small meals a day ...

S: Yes. I think that you should study your own mechanism, find out how you yourself function, what is best for you, what suits you. Sometimes, of course, you may have to compromise with other people, if you're living in a community, compromise to some extent. But I think in the world today most people don't live a very natural sort of life and they don't know what the natural functioning of their mechanism is. It's been distorted. What about, for instance, people who do night work? [42] Or work a shift system?

I think it is important to know oneself in this respect on the purely physical, biological level. And know what suits you. Also know what your weaknesses are, the sort of things you must avoid. Some people have to avoid too many late nights. Some people need to avoid alcohol, etc. Some people need to avoid heavy meals. Some people need to avoid going without food for too long. One should study one's system and respect it, and not abuse it. When you're young there's a tendency to abuse your system because you can stand it. But if you abuse it too much, then you suffer later on in life, more often than not. I hope none of you have yet begun to pay any such price! Then you have to take up things like yoga, karate, and the rest.

Anyway, that's addiction to sleep. Perhaps we've said enough about that.

And then, another cause of downfall: what I've translated as 'addiction to company'; in the Pali sabhasili. Sabha is 'gathering', 'association', the group. So sabhasili means 'one who is habituated to the group': a'groupie', though not in the sense in which the term is usually used! One who is addicted to the group; one who is dependent on the group, identified with the group; and who can't get away from the group, doesn't want to get away from the group, from society, from company. It's one who is 'addicted to company'; that's how I've translated it. That's probably quite literal: 'addiction to company'. So why should one be addicted to company?

Mike Howes: Because one doesn't like one's own company.

S: One doesn't like one's own company. Any other reasons?

Dharmananda: Insecurity.

Prajnananda: You don't want to forge your own identity.

S: Mmmm. Or you want distraction. (Pause) So dependence as distinct from objective reliance on the group is a cause of decline, a cause of deterioration, degeneration, downfall. And there's no doubt a lot that could be said under this heading, some of which has no doubt been said before on different occasions, in different contexts.

Kulananda: It's interesting what you say about objective reliance. Because I've come to realize more and more recently how much I depend on the Sangha.

S: Here I'm speaking of the group as distinct from the Sangha; but there is an objective, non-neurotic, dependence or, better, reliance on the group, which is perhaps unavoidable. Do you see what I mean? That you don't for instance grow your own food; you're dependent, you rely on the group, other members of the group to grow it for you. But that doesn't amount necessarily to neurotic dependence on the group. This is an aspect of the division of labour, without which society, certainly civilized society, is not possible.

[43]
Sumitra: The tendency in a group, as I see it, is that you have usually a shared set of opinions and ideals, and that you can argue - is true of the spiritual community as well. So, where you have somebody who is looking from the outside at the spiritual community, in what sense can you say that the spiritual community is different from his own situation, apart from the ideology which you're subscribing to?

S: I think I've said before that for one who is not an Individual himself it is virtually impossible to distinguish between the group and the spiritual community; because a spiritual community is made up of Individuals by very definition. If you're not an Individual yourself it will hardly be possible for you to recognize other Individuals or recognize others as Individuals; hence what is in fact a spiritual community will appear to you as a group.

Kulananda: It's a coincidence of will. The will comes from the Individuals and they happen to coincide. The Individuals have their own wills which happen to coincide with each other.

S: Yes, whereas with the group it's more like a coincidence of conditionings rather than free, spontaneous liberated wills.

Kulananda: Or in fact that the will comes from the group, rather than the Individual.

S: Yes, it's a collective will rather than a truly Individual one. Members of the group may think that it's their individual will, but very often they don't realize the extent to which their will, such as it is, just reflects or embodies the group will, group consciousness even. (Pause)

It does seem that there is sometimes a place for association with other members of the group, on a group basis. But it must always be clearly distinguished from spiritual friendship, from association with other people who are trying to become Individuals on the basis of shared spiritual ideals. I think for anyone trying to be an Individual, trying to join or create with others a spiritual community, it's a sad waste of time and energy just to fritter away time in a very superficial socializing. And to become addicted to company, to be unable to do without that; always to want to have people around, chatting with them, joking with them in a very light frivolous kind of way. You don't want to go away and be by yourself and think or read or meditate. You just always want to be with other people in this superficial, frothy sort of way. I think this is quite an enemy of spiritual life; it isn't even a genuine group activity.

Chris Harper: Because you're not relating to them as Individuals?

S: No, I don't mean that, because even when it's a genuine group activity you're not relating to others as Individuals.

[44]
S: It's the froth of the group, not even the genuine, honest, down-to-earth group. It's not even that.

Dharmananda: So the addict is actually just sitting on the periphery enjoying ...

Chris Harper: Just staying distracted.

S: War is a group activity, but it's pretty serious. The sort of socializing I'm thinking of is not serious at all in any way. It's thoroughly superficial.

Kulananda: In fact, it's designed to avoid seriousness.

S: It can be very draining, enervating.

Mike Howes: I feel that addiction to company, using company to reinforce one's own ego - certainly there's a part of me I recognize. It seems to be a really deep part of one. You've got to be fighting this addiction to company all the time.

S: I think one has to be careful to discriminate; one is not saying that the group is wrong, or completely negative. Or that one should never function as a group member. One needs to be able to do that. It's as though it's on the basis of one's healthy group membership, or one's healthy group identity, that one builds the superstructure of Individuality. If you're not even able to function as a member of the group, as you need the group to be reasonably healthy, on the group level, you're very unlikely to be able to function as an Individual, to develop as an Individual. So I don't want to negate or dismiss the group completely.

Kulananda: What are examples of healthy group activity?

S: Well, when people are working together growing food, for instance. That is a group activity.

End of Cassette Three, Side One

Cassette Three, Side Two

Sumitra: In Peace is a Fire there's a little aphorism: 'The group is always wrong'. Does what you just said in a way contradict that?

S: No. I'm being a bit paradoxical there, of course. The group is contrasted with the Individual, so the group in relation to the Individual is always wrong, because the group is always the group in relation to the Individual. (Laughs) Do you see what I mean? In terms of the Individual, the group is always wrong, must be wrong, because it's the group and not the Individual. Of course, don't take it too literally.

[45]
Chris Harper: Is it wrong simply in the sense that it must always be a compromise?

S: No, it's always wrong in relation to the Individual, in terms of the Individual because it is not the Individual. I don't mean to say that if the group says two and two is four, then the group is wrong. I mean the Individual must see things differently from the group; and the group, therefore, is always wrong. The group is even wrong when it doesn't disagree with the Individual, because it's sure to not disagree for the wrong reason, for a group reason not a genuinely Individual reason. (Laughter) The group is always wrong, the group cannot win from the point of view of the Individual.

Sumitra: So if the group was right, it would be the spiritual community?

S: Well .. yes. (Laughter) But you can't have a sort of collective rightness; you can only have a coincidence of rightnesses.

Kulananda: The spiritual community has no opinions. If it did, it would be a group. But members of the spiritual community may have coincident opinions.

S: I think opinion is not quite the right term here but we'll let that pass. But I'm being a bit paradoxical in that aphorism to get people thinking. Don't take the expression too literally. (Pause)

Anyway, perhaps that's enough about 'addiction to company' or 'addiction to the group'. I think that's pretty straightforward. It's more a question of keeping watch upon oneself and just being able to detect when one is just drifting into mindless socializing, especially when one does this as an escape from oneself or out of laziness.

Anyway, that brings us on to the next one. 'Unaroused' and I've added in brackets 'in energy', because that's what it really means. The word in P
ali is anutthata, which means 'not standing up'. That's the root meaning: 'not standing up', 'not getting up' therefore 'not arousing oneself', not arousing energy. This is a cause of downfall, a cause of deterioration: if you don't mobilize your energy, stir up your energy.

Kulananda: Do you think it's possible that Saddhatissa didn't translate it because of the Theravadin antipathy to the passions, and perhaps he actually thought it just couldn't be right, because he wanted to be so dispassionate?

S: No, I think it is more likely that he was a bit careless and missed it.

Chris Harper: Is it possible that he thought it was the same as the first of them?

S: Or the same as lazy? Because lazy comes up as alasi that comes afterwards. But it adds an additional force, another [46] dimension. One who is of un-stirred-up energy and also one who is lazy. Well, the two are similar but they're certainly distinguished in the text and in one's translation one should respect that. They could have slipped up. The typist could have missed it. So perhaps one shouldn't be too hard on him. (Laughter) So let's see what the other translators say. Hare says 'lax and slack'. 'Lax': that's not bad. You're 'relaxed' in a negative sort of way when you don't stir up your energy.

Kulananda: Although it does lack the implication of the opposite which your's carries.

S: Yes, right. But it means you must sort of keep watch over yourself and take note when your energy is not aroused. You should be, according to the Buddha's teaching in other contexts, in a state of perpetually aroused energy. Which doesn't mean that you should always be rushing about doing things, because when you're meditating you're also in a state of aroused energy. You can be quiet and peaceful but in a state of aroused energy. The energy's there, it's ready; it's simply that at that particular moment there's not occasion to use it or to manifest it in any external very obvious manner. But energy is aroused; there's no blockage; there's nothing in the way; it's flowing. So that's a very important state to be in. If one's not in that state, if one's not in that state of having one's energy aroused, then one is in decline, one is deteriorating.

Kulananda: And one tends to neurosis, because when you're experiencing your own energy that's a fairly satisfying and contented state. (S: Yes.)

Chris Harper: Ideally this energy would be aroused, you'd be in this state, as a result of your meditation practice. That's the way that you can arouse this energy.

S: Well, that certainly does help very much. Whether it's the best way for everybody under all possible circumstances, that's difficult to say. But certainly that is one of the most important ways in which energy is aroused. Sometimes it's aroused through physical exercise.

Sumitra: How would you distinguish the energy of, say, Margaret Thatcher, who does seem to engage in her activity very thoroughly, very energetically? Or, say, a powerful businessman who does expend what would seem to be a lot of energy. Presumably that must be distinguished from the kind of energy that you're talking about here?

S: Yes and no. Aroused energy is aroused energy. It's as though in a manner of speaking energy as such is neutral. Energy becomes skilful or unskilful according to that way in which it is utilized. I mean, no doubt Margaret Thatcher is a woman of aroused energy, but her energy is aroused by, and for the sake of, politics of a particular kind. Now it could be that if her aroused energy was channelled into meditation she [47] could do very well indeed, because she clearly has energy and is capable of arousing her energy. But the chances are, I would say, that her energies would not be aroused in the same way by the prospect of meditation. Her energies are aroused by the prospect of politics, which means really by the prospect of power, of exercising power. Her energies are aroused by that particular objective. So one might say that there are two points here. First of all, it is important to be able to arouse one's energy anyway; but it's also important to be able to direct that aroused energy in the proper manner.

Chris Harper: Otherwise, it's not really virya. You've defined virya as 'enthusiasm for the good'.

S: Yes. One could therefore draw a distinction between aroused energy in the general sense and virya, which is that same aroused energy directed to something which is specifically good. So Margaret Thatcher has energy, aroused energy, but it's doubtful if she has virya. But you must have aroused energy before you can have virya. You can have aroused energy without necessarily having virya; but you can't have virya unless you've got aroused energy. So, in a way, the arousing of energy is the more basic question. That comes first.

Kulananda: You've got to learn how to trigger it off for yourself.

S: Yes. You've got to learn not only how to trigger it off, but how to trigger it off by means of a highly positive objective. Well, you can see the way in which people's energies are triggered off or not triggered off. I've seen it for myself, even here in Sukhavati! I've heard someone say: 'People feel like having a meditation tonight? at, say, eight o'clock?' No, there's no energy aroused by the prospect of meditation at eight o'clock. Someone mentions a film. 'Oh, right!' (Laughter) Energy comes rushing up. [People are] really aroused, galvanized, by the prospect of going and seeing a film together; they're going and doing this, doing that, getting ready, combing their hair, and so on. Do you see what I mean? So energy is very often there, but it's a question of finding the right object, the object that will galvanize it; in this context finding a positive, skilful object.

Mike Howes: Because of my background I've met quite a lot of quite senior businessmen. I've often thought that, really, in terms of being in touch with their energy, in perhaps a very limited way, they really are. If only they could well, if at some point they decided that their life was unsatisfactory, they could really put a lot of energy in ...

S: Well, could But could they? Because that is the point: whether that same energy would be aroused by such a very different set of objectives. In some cases perhaps yes. But in very many cases perhaps no. I don't think one can necessarily just switch one's energy, even if one is intellectually [48] convinced that one ought to switch it. It seems that an element of vision is necessary.

Mike Howes: Often these businessmen have a vision, a very mundane vision; that's what drives them a power vision.

S: Well, I reserve the word 'vision' for something somewhat higher. A mundane vision would be, for me, a contradiction in terms. But they're inspired by something: the prospect of wealth, riches, power, influence. Even more concrete things: a Rolls Royce, a mansion in the country, a string of beautiful secretaries. They're motivated by the prospect of enjoying all those things.

Chris Harper: Quite often people like that are just motivated to prove something to themselves or other people without perhaps the concrete vision of ...

S: Here you're introducing the slightly neurotic element. Of course very often it's the case [that] people are motivated by quite neurotic compulsions.

Chris Harper: So a neurotic state of mind can give rise to energy, perhaps in the bad sense?

S: A very compulsive energy. I think this is where we come up against a real problem we notice in connection with the Centre and Centre activities and the people who come along. Some people come along in a pretty awful state. And after a bit of meditation and 'good company', let's say, as distinct from kalyana mitrata they become more healthy, more positive. Their energies start becoming aroused. So it isn't too difficult to get people to that state, to a state of being somewhat happy, healthy, and human, with their ordinary human energies aroused and even flowing. But having got people to that state I think it's much more difficult to get them to harness those arisen energies to a purely spiritual ideal. They'll want, more often than not, just to remain on that healthy, happy and human level, just enjoying it, enjoying that state. You might dangle Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha in front of their noses, but no their energies, having been arisen, are not stirred by those things.

Prajnananda: It's like they've got over the negative motivation of the suffering and unhappiness they were in but it's so difficult to replace it with positive motivation.

S: (Interrupting) So arousing people's energies is one thing, but harnessing those energies to a purely spiritual objective is quite another thing. I think perhaps we haven't paid sufficient attention to the second. I think we've perhaps tended to assume that if you've achieved the first, the second would more or less automatically follow.

Kulananda: It's very difficult, because it seems to me that on the one hand you've somehow got to provide an experience. [49] People can then understand; and then aspire to develop it. But how you can provide experience for people I don't know.

S: Well, sometimes you can provide it by providing the conditions under which or within which it is most likely to occur, as when you provide them with a retreat situation. Sometimes

that can precipitate something much more than just an upsurge of energy. It can even precipitate or spark off a spark of vision which will then of course guide and direct people's energies.

Kulananda: I was struck quite recently: we had FWBO day at the Centre and I took a puja, quite an elaborate puja; we had lots of offerings, lots of lights, lots of readings and I came out of the puja as if I was on another planet. It was really quite a strong experience. But everyone else came out and just started chatting immediately as if nothing had really happened.

S: Ah, yes. I've noticed this sort of thing time and time again; hundreds of times I think. I've been surprised, I'm still surprised, when it happens usually after meditation, in communities, on retreats. Yes, within half a minute people are chatting as though they haven't meditated and sometimes I wonder: Well, were they meditating? They were sitting there; they were pretty still; they weren't moving. So what sort of state were they in? Because one knows from one's own experience that if you've been actually meditating for an hour you can't walk straight out of the door and just start chatting. You don't want to. But here people are doing that very thing. And it's a very common occurrence. So, sometimes I wonder whether they've actually been meditating, or what they've actually been doing while they've been sitting there. I've also wondered whether perhaps there is a certain sort of almost negative streak in one which almost compels you to undo the good that you've done, whenever you've done it.

Chris Harper: It's like you're relieved to get out ...

S: Yes, a sort of reaction sets in. Even though you've had a good meditation you at once want to go to the other extreme. The gravitational pull at once asserts itself. But I think one has to be very mindful of that, that one doesn't immediately dissipate the fruits of meditation or puja or whatever.

Kulananda: Or it just doesn't integrate itself.

S: One sees people doing that and it's so sad. They just throw away immediately, instantly whatever benefits they've gained from the meditation or the puja; just chuck them away. You can see it happen.

Sumitra: That's very interesting, 'cause it was one of the things that I noticed very much when you were leading the meditations in Tuscany that the length of the gap between the actual end of the meditation when the final bell is rung [50] and the time that you would leave the shrine room was very much longer than I've ever experienced ever before. I very much appreciated that.

S: But that rather surprises me, because I was under the impression that I didn't especially linger. I thought that maybe some people lingered more. But sometimes, what I might actually say is that for me, from my point of view, I get up and go out quite quickly. But I do that deliberately because the intention is to prolong the meditation after you've got up as a practice, as it were. Not that you wait five or ten minutes so that you can get out of the meditation. Do you see what I mean? (Sumitra: Yes, I do.)
One leaves just enough time for people to unlock themselves from their yogic postures and all that. But after that one gets up reasonably smartly because it isn't one's intention just to end the meditation there. You prolong it because it is an additional practice to maintain that same

state of mind while you are just moving about. So that eventually you are in that meditative for want of a better word frame of mind all the time; it's not just confined to the shrine room.

Sumitra: So is there anything that you could suggest that you could say to people [to suggest] that at the end of the meditation it would be better not to just sort of stand around chatting in an aimless manner? Is there any sort of positive direction that you could ...

S: Well, you could just warn people that they will find that when they've had a good meditation, even after the bell has rung, even after they've stood up, they don't actually feel like standing about and talking. (Laughter) You can do this with beginners. And they may well take the hint.

Chris Harper: I'm very much in favour of having a silence after the puja class. I find it very ...

S: Well, one could even have that. Announce that there will be a ten or fifteen minute silence after the puja. And tea can be served and people can have ten or fifteen minutes of silence and then just slowly start talking, mindfully start talking. Otherwise people pour out of the door and at once start chatting: 'Hello, did you see that film last week?' and: 'Oh yes, I bought a new coat'. This is what you hear. It's dreadful.

Kulananda: I would suggest that if you were to do that, attendance at the classes would drop, because a lot of people come along almost for the tea-break, for the social occasion. There are people who do that. But I wonder if that would be a bad thing.

S: I think then ... well, no doubt if some people want to come along mainly for the socializing and tea-break, fair enough. But one needs to keep that pretty peripheral. And let [51] it come in due time. Let it not start up immediately after the meditation and the puja. Presumably such people have sat through the meditation in order to get to the socializing well, all right, let them wait a bit longer!

Prajnananda: Isn't there a silence following the double meditation and puja in the Friday night class [at the LBC]?

S: One has to follow a middle course. One doesn't want to stifle people or sit on them or anything of that sort. But it is a pity that if you've gained something in the meditation or puja that you just dissipate it immediately afterwards. It means your own effort is wasted; and also, of course, very likely you've become very unmindful.

Chris Harper: I identify very much with the idea of silence after meditation. I identify with what you and Kulananda have said very much. But sometimes I've found when I've a good meditation that I've very much enjoyed, I come downstairs and I just feel like dancing around and whistling just being what I feel is generally positive actually.

S: Well, so long as you're mindful.

Chris Harper: I think, I feel, that that's quite healthy actually. I don't feel it's always appropriate just to be silent. Do you see what I mean?

S: Yes. But we were especially referring to people's mindless chatter immediately after

meditation and puja. Harmonious, dance-like movements even a tuneful whistle are acceptable!

Mike Howes: Taking this social problem further: I think in a tape you gave the scenario of a young man who came along to the Centre and he was pretty bad at relating with people; and he got better through meditation and contact and then immediately went off with his girlfriend. In Regular and Irregular Steps, I think it was.

S: Ah, I remember. But those things don't happen nowadays, do they?

Mike Howes: It seems quite attractive [to some people]. A lot of people come along to the Centre not terribly good at relating to people; and they meditate and they suddenly relate to people. And all of a sudden they find this whole new world, a very attractive world, of people and relationships. It must be quite a trap.

S: Yes. It's the same sort of thing that I was talking about earlier. One's energies are aroused by means of a bit of meditation and positive contact. It's not very difficult to achieve. But then it's a question of what someone does with those aroused energies, or that more happy, healthy, and human state which they have discovered and which they are [52] experiencing in its fullness perhaps for the first time in their lives. But it does seem a pity that they just get stuck in that that deva-like state and don't go any further. And so you're left feeling as though you've conducted a useful bit of therapy, but that's about all.

Mike Howes: How can we do things differently at Centres to overcome that sort of problem?

S: I don't think there's any sort of quick or easy solution. I think the best way, though in some ways it's very difficult, is keeping up individual contact with people and trying to kindle and to keep alive a genuine spiritual interest; helping people to realize that there is something beyond the happy, healthy and human state; that there's a lot more for them to get out of the Centre. But they can be quite entranced and quite intoxicated with all these happy, healthy, and human activities. I think Order Members especially and even Mitras must be very careful that they don't sort of use the Centre in just a social sort of way.

Kulananda: Also, they must see themselves as more than therapists. (S: Oh yes.) It's a bit of a trap. (Long Pause)

S: Anyway ... aroused energy: if you don't have aroused energy, that's a cause of downfall.

And of course if you are lazy, alasi. What is laziness? I've often wondered about this. It's pretty clear that laziness is a pretty negative state under almost all circumstances or under almost all conditions. Well, what is laziness? What makes people lazy?

Dharmananda: It seems to overlay the last one with active reluctance. (Amusement) I find this. (S: Yes.)

Kulananda: It's a sort of pseudo-comfort, isn't it? Because a lazy state isn't really a comfortable state, isn't really enjoyable, but it's ...

S: It can become very boring after a time.

Kulananda: It's incredibly boring. You're not quite awake, not alive.

Mike Howes: There's a selfishness tied up in being lazy, isn't there?

S: Yes, very likely. [But] what is actually happening, what is going on when you are being lazy? This is what I'm trying to get at.

Sumitra: There's a cessation of real caring. You stop ... You're not interested enough in activity to undertake it. Things cease to have an interest. You cease to have a care for what you're doing.

[53]
S: Your attitude is: Why bother? 'Why should I bother?'

Kulananda: 'Why should I bother?'

S: 'What does it matter?'

Kulananda: Yes. This is selfishness, isn't it?

Mike Howes: That seems to me to be cynicism.

S: It could be. It's a sort of unwillingness to mobilize energy. You could define laziness in that way: 'Unwillingness to mobilize energy', 'reluctance to mobilize energy'.

Chris Harper: Yes, that's interesting. Instead of just a lack of energy.

S: Because a lazy person is not necessarily devoid of energy. But he's refusing to mobilize that energy.

Kulananda: He might get aroused sometimes.

S: Yes if you take away his cushion, for instance. (Laughter)

Kulananda: I'd say metta is probably one of the best antidotes to laziness, developing a concern for others.

S: Yes, yes. If you've got a well-developed metta, you can't be lazy. (Pause)

Sumitra: If you're unwilling to mobilize energy would that, do you feel, imply that at some stage the mobilization of energy had been a painful experience for you?

S: I think that does sometimes happen with people; but I think the resultant inactivity would not usually be termed laziness. Sometimes it might be diagnosed as laziness, but wrongly, I would say. I would say there ought to be a separate term I'm not sure what it is for that sort of state, that sort of experience when, for instance, you've mobilized your energy, tried to express your energy repeatedly, but it's been time and again frustrated, so you just don't try any more. That is not laziness. But it might appear to other people that you are being lazy. In a school sometimes certain pupils are identified as lazy, but they're not lazy, they're merely

frustrated.

Kulananda: Or apathetic.

S: Apathetic, yes. Yes. Maybe apathetic is the term here rather than lazy. Your energies are frustrated so many times that they just won't respond any more, they just refuse to be aroused, because they know, or think that they know, that they're going to be disappointed. So they're not going to bother. That is a sort of apathy rather than laziness.

[54]
Kulananda: It goes hand-in-hand with cynicism.

Sumitra: No, not necessarily.

S: Not necessarily, no. I think it could develop ... It's more disillusionment than cynicism, though it could possibly in extreme cases develop into cynicism if you start generalizing and thinking: 'Well, life's like that. What can you expect? Everybody's like that. That's the way things are. Can't expect anything better, anything different.'

Kulananda: It's a peculiarly British phenomenon.

Sumitra: 'Cause what I was aiming at a little bit there was: Exactly how do you get into it? What is the cause of that state? How does that mental state arise in the first place?

S: That of laziness proper? (Sumitra: Mmm.) Well, what do you think? Has it got just one single cause? Perhaps it's lack of imagination, lack of vision, lack of care.

Kulananda: Ego-centricity.

S: Egocentricity. Perhaps there's an infantile element in it, a regressive element. Maybe it's also connected with a love of one's own ease, a love of comfort. (Pause) I remember seeing in a bookshop in New Zealand a little book called The Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment. (Laughter)

Kulananda: Sounds handy.

S: Well, I said of someone I knew that it would be just the book for him except that he was too lazy to go and buy it! (Laughter)

Chris Harper: Did you read it? Did it have any useful information? Perhaps we should send for a copy!

S: I didn't actually read it. I just saw it there. It's a little book. It was an American publication, I think. (Pause)

Anyway, I'm sure everyone can recognize the state when they see it, both in themselves and hopefully in other people hopefully, in the sense that they've actually diagnosed the other person's complaints correctly, that they haven't mistaken, say, apathy for laziness. But as soon as one sees it one must work on it, do something about it.

Chris Harper: What's the Pali word for laziness?

S: Alasi. Alaso naro is 'the lazy man'. Then, kodhapano. This can be translated in a couple of ways. You might have been wondering where Chalmers' 'critic with his constant carping' comes in. Well, it comes in in this way: You can translate, understand, kodhapano either as 'known as angry' it's a compound word or 'of angry intelligence', i.e. critical, carping, fault-finding. Do you see [55] what I mean? It can grammatically, apparently, be either of those. It can be interpreted or understood in either of those senses. Is that clear? Either someone who is 'known to be angry' or else someone who is 'of angry intelligence'. He's got a critical, attacking sort of mind. He's intelligent, but it's motivated by anger.

You find quite a few people like that, don't you? They've got a very good mind, a very shrewd penetrating sort of mind. But their mental activity, their intellectual activity, is motivated by anger. So they tend to attack, to criticize, even to carp. So both of these are causes of downfall. If you're known to be an angry person, if you're so angry that you are known as an angry person which suggests that you are habitually angry, of angry temperament then that's a cause of downfall. Or an alternative explanation it's a cause of downfall if you have one of these hypercritical sort of intelligences, if you're always engaged in very negative, destructive criticism for criticism's sake, for destruction's sake.

That an habitually angry person is one who is in decline; that's pretty obvious. I'm rather inclined to think that the actual explanation may be the other one, the alternative one: a person of hypercritical intelligence, who attacks for the sake of attacking, because he gets a sort of pleasure out of it. That sort of destructive element is in him. What he says may be objectively justified, objectively valid, but the motivation for that criticism is not very positive. I think one could maybe translate that as: 'one of destructively critical intelligence'. They're very good at just tearing things apart. They get a kick out of that, they're very good at that.

I think maybe one could broaden it out a bit and say it's the tendency to be critical rather than appreciative. It's not that criticism necessarily is wrong or bad. But sometimes we're one-sidedly critical, lacking in appreciation. I see this quite a lot, even within the Movement. There's not enough positive encouragement, warmth, sympathy, appreciation. But people are very good at criticizing! They can spot the weaknesses in someone's position, in someone's work, very quickly and easily, and they tend to concentrate on that. They tend to gravitate towards that, to feed on that. And that suggests an element of negativity within themselves. So one should emphasize the positive, appreciative side much more, give people much more encouragement. There isn't really enough of this. I'm talking now about the Movement in general. Maybe there's a bit more than there usually is around.

I've certainly noticed this in India. I've felt people much more appreciative. In fact, I've joked about it once or twice in lectures and at meetings. There's no doubt that they really are glad to see you. You can't possibly miss it. They make it absolutely clear. Well, when you're sitting there at a meeting, before giving your talk, sometimes afterwards and you're given forty or fifty garlands by people with big smiles well, obviously you can't mistake it. They are glad to see you. I did say this in India. I said in England you're not always quite sure whether people are glad to see you or [56] not, because they don't actually say very much, they don't do these sort of things. So sometimes you're left wondering whether they really are pleased to see you. Whereas in India you're never in any doubt. And that's true.

Kulananda: I think that in the FWBO we've developed a form of critical language which is on its positive side is based on discrimination, and we do discriminate between actions and we discriminate quite finely. (S: Yes, right.) The negative side of that, though, is that we have perhaps this tendency to be overly critical as opposed to appreciative.

S: Yes. The discrimination is correct. It is correct that one discriminates skilful from unskilful. I think people do that on the whole quite well. But I think they're too ready to attribute the unskilful which they have discriminated to somebody or to a certain situation. It's good that you can discriminate skilful from unskilful. But it's not good that you should too readily attribute the unskilful to somebody.

Kulananda: And even if it is attributable to somebody, perhaps one should just, well, let it rest and dwell more on the positive.

S: Yes, yes. Perhaps you should have an appreciation week in every community, when you make a special point just for one week longer might be a strain! of just appreciating one another.

Voice: Rejoicing in merits.

S: Rejoicing in merits, yes. Telling one another what nice chaps you really are!

End of Cassette Three, Side Two

Cassette Four, Side One

... so that suggests the start of it; that they're even happy to get, sometimes, appreciation when it isn't really the genuine article, when it's, say, more formal, and they know it's formal, but still they're glad to get it. They still feel good getting it.

Mike Howes: That seems to be one sort of bad fashion that came out of the 'sixties: the fashion of not showing courtesy.

S: Ah, yes. I've been thinking about this quite a lot, especially after getting back from India. One really notices, especially among Indians of the older generation, and especially maybe Western-educated Indians, the display of courtesy is quite noticeable. They're very polite to oneself and to one another in a way that one just doesn't often encounter in this country. Well, I don't encounter it in the circles in which I move! (Laughter) And I think we do miss [57] some of them.

We have discussed formality and informality in the past. If you can express appreciation and courtesy and all that sort of thing spontaneously well, that's good enough. But if you're not able to do it spontaneously well, for heaven's sake have a few accepted ways of expressing it which you can have recourse to when you're not able to spontaneously find some appropriate expression yourself. Do you see what I mean?

I notice this especially, for instance, when people are around [that] I don't know, I haven't seen before. No one introduces them to me; this is what they should do. People should be a bit aware: This person is new. Bhante hasn't met him before; he hasn't met Bhante. And just

introduce [us]. Otherwise I have to sort of eye him. Sometimes I don't remember: Well, have I met him before? Maybe; I'm not certain. So I don't want to say hello as if I haven't met him before when perhaps I have, or vice versa. And perhaps he hesitates to speak. He doesn't know whether it's the thing to do or not. Perhaps he'd like to, but he's not sure whether he should; and so nothing happens! It's not a very satisfactory situation. Do you see what I mean?

Usually I just ask afterwards: Well, who was that person? I find out, and then, if it seems appropriate, I just say something to him. But it shouldn't have to be managed in that sort of way. These little formalities should be observed. I mean, sometimes even at Padmaloka I turn up for lunch and there's a strange person sitting there. No one says anything. (Laughter) I can't make out who he is or what he is and why he's there; whether it's someone who called by and was just invited to have a meal, or whether it's someone who's come to stay with us for a week. And sometimes I don't know and no one says anything. So it would be much better, I think, if we observed a few little formalities.

I spoke about this also at the Chairmen's Meeting; I think it was in connection with introducing speakers, people giving lectures. Devamitra complained that in one or two Centres the introduction was sort of bungled. In one particular Centre apparently someone just sort of stumbled to his feet and said: 'Well, Devamitra's going to talk now' and sat down. It was all done very ungracefully.

So I said [that], first of all, you should choose as Chairman someone who knows his job. He should be in possession of his facts. He should be able to speak a few pleasant words by way of introduction, putting the speaker at his ease, introducing the speaker to the audience, filling them in with a bit of background information about the speaker. There may be members of the public who haven't the faintest idea who that speaker is. 'Upasaka Devamitra': Well, who is he? What's he done? What are his qualifications for speaking? A few words by the Chairman just to fill people in a bit. And then he invites him to speak; and afterwards thanks him in a proper sort of way. All of this helps the evening to go more smoothly, makes the meeting more successful, makes the lecture more successful.

But these things very often are neglected. I've had that experience myself. I've had it in India also once. Because [58] sometimes meetings were organized by bodies other than the FWBO - just local groups. And sometimes they'll just get some prominent local person to act as chairman. So on once occasion the chairman got to his feet and got behind the mike, and he said: 'We now have a lecture on the Dhamma by, by, what's his name?' (Laughter) This actually happened. So, yes, sometimes it happens like that.

So you must be well-primed. Even in the FWBO sometimes the chairman has forgotten or hasn't known the title of the talk. Or not been clear about it. Or got it wrong. So this is not good. All these sort of things should be attended to more carefully. People should be welcomed when they arrive, especially when people arrive, whether it's a Centre or a Community. I think this is still one of the least positive legacies of the 'sixties: this pseudo-informality, a very self-conscious informality, almost.

Chris Harper: It's a neglect, isn't it?

S: Mmm. It's as though the group is ceasing to function even as a positive group. There's no

question of spiritual community; but [it's] not even functioning properly on the positive group level.

Sumitra: Yes. I can see to a certain extent where that arises from: in a situation where you're introduced to a complete stranger and you almost feel obliged to then carry on a conversation which has got very little basis. And it can be very difficult and really quite sort of embarrassing, awkward, in that situation to just try and have something to say to them. You're searching and fishing around for something to say.

S: I think there's a lack probably of social skills and also even of basic self-confidence because people in other countries well, Indians at least they don't seem to have that difficulty at all. But I mean, why should you have to think of something to say? Either you've got something to say - if you feel like saying something - or you don't - so you don't say anything.

Sumitra: Yeah. I think certainly for the English that's a very difficult thing to do: to just stand there and 'I've got nothing to say'.

S: I mean, sometimes people try to 'make conversation' with me, and I find it quite boring. They've got stock little questions: 'How long are you down for?' The favourite one recently is: 'How are you getting on with your memoirs?' - which I find thoroughly boring, because I can feel, I can sense, they're not really interested. It's just a little sort of conversational gambit. So one has to be more genuine than that.

Sumitra: Yes. But in a sense that is a return to the more 'formal' form.

[59]
S: Yes. One has to use the formal. One has to use the formal as a means of getting communication going. You don't just remain on that level of polite formal conversation. That is what tends to happen of course in some social circles. But one shouldn't allow that to happen. One should quite consciously just use those polite social gambits to establish something more genuine.

Prajnananda: Like communication exercises, where what one is actually saying doesn't matter very much. It's how you say it. (S: Right, yes.) So you can actually say, you can actually convey something through those stock social exchanges.

S: Yes, that's true: if they express your genuine interest in that other person. And if someone new turns up in your Centre, your Community, you should be interested in him. You should have some sort of care. I mean, say somebody has arrived; it's meal-time; they maybe feel a bit awkward. They don't know whether they're just supposed to go and get a plate of food with everybody else or whether they're supposed to be invited. You should realize their predicament. Maybe say to them: 'Well, would you like to have something to eat?' But sometimes people are left just standing there, or sitting there, not quite sure what they're supposed to do. And people in England are usually very anxious to 'do the right thing'. And feel very embarrassed if they're caught out doing 'the wrong thing'. So one has to realize that, appreciate that. Anyway, that's that verse. Maybe we've

Mike Howes: Could I ask you about the verse as a whole? These items are meant to be read together in fact? There is this characteristic. They link quite closely?

S: They seem to be associated. 'Being one who is addicted to sleep; addicted to company; un-aroused in energy; lazy and known for irascibility' or what was the alternative translation? 'of angry intelligence' or 'hypercritical' or 'destructively critical intelligence' 'this is a cause of one's decline'. If we interpret it as 'of destructively critical intelligence' how does that link up with these other qualities? It's as if to say you can't do anything yourself. You're addicted to sleep; you're addicted to company; your energy is unaroused; you're lazy. But what you can do is to criticize other people. Sometimes one finds that, doesn't one? You might even think that is your contribution. (Pause)

Anyway, have you got that verse? Have you written that one down? 'Being one who is addicted to sleep, addicted to company, unaroused in energy, lazy, and of destructively critical intelligence.' Or you can say: 'and known for irascibility'. Grammatically, both are possible. I think the first is probably the more accurate. ' This is a cause of one's decline.' (Pause) All right. Let's just take one more verse. It's a pretty straightforward, simple, down-to-earth, basic topic. In fact, it relates to mother and father. And it goes like this in my new translation:

[60]
'He who though sufficiently well-off,
Does not support either mother or father,
(Though they are) decayed and no longer young,
This is a cause of downfall;
This is a cause of decline.'

That's pretty literal. There aren't any really difficult or ambiguous words there. You'll notice [that] in Pali as in Sanskrit 'mother' comes before 'father'. That could be just a sort of accident of language, or it could have a meaning. That mother in a way takes precedence.

When I was translating this, a little item of Vinaya occurred to me. The bhikkhu, as you know, usually depends upon alms. Traditionally, the bhikkhu goes from house to house, or from door to door, collecting almsfood, and he subsists on that. That was the old system. Certainly it was the system in the Buddha's day. So there was a Vinaya rule that you could not support lay people with the almsfood that you had obtained. This was given by devoted lay-people specifically to support you to support people leading a higher spiritual life. And if you used the contents of your begging-bowl to support people who are not living that higher spiritual life, you would in effect be misappropriating what you had been given. You're given, as it were, a donation for a particular purpose. You're supposed to use it for that purpose.

But there's one exception: a bhikkhu can support his mother out of his begging bowl if she has no other means of subsistence. That's quite specific, quite definite. Supposing a mother is left a widow on her own; none of her children to support her. The bhikkhu is allowed, even though he's a bhikkhu, to support his mother out of his begging-bowl. But nobody else. Not even his father. Not his brother. Not his sister. But only his mother. So why do you think that exception was made?

Dharmananda: Well, it recognizes the gratitude that you ought to have for your mother.

S: Yes. First of all it's a question of gratitude, repaying a debt. In a way, this mark a difference between Hinduism and Buddhism. In Hinduism the sannyasin, the person who's gone forth

from the household life, is civilly dead. He has no connection with civil society. No further responsibility towards it. But that's not quite the case with Buddhism. The bhikkhu has the duty, in a manner of speaking, to teach. Though it's not a sort of social duty, if you see what I mean; it's a spiritual duty. Something that he has to recognize himself. He's not under any obligation to teach. The teaching is the spontaneous outpouring of his spiritual experience. But he does have that sort of connection, or is expected to have that connection, with society after he's reached a certain level of spiritual maturity. It's a natural result. It can be looked for.

In the same way, the fact that he has become a bhikkhu does not abrogate, as it were, all natural duties and natural ties. He is permitted to support his mother if necessary. Do you see what I mean? So one could say he recognizes a debt. He [61] supports his mother because he recognizes a debt. It's not that because he's become a monk he has no further debts to civil society or to his relations. No, that debt cannot be renounced, as it were. But there's also another aspect, which is the psychological one, the emotional one; because probably the emotional tie with the mother is stronger than any other emotional tie.

So supposing your mother was in difficulties and you didn't, or you weren't allowed to, help her, probably you would have to go against a very deep-seated natural feeling; even a not unhealthy feeling, assuming that you weren't neurotically dependent on your mother. You see what I mean? So you should not be obliged to go against that. That could be deleterious, even from a spiritual point of view. It's a question of a middle way. We have explored this in connection with people's relations with their parents within the context of the FWBO. We certainly insist on people 'Going Forth', whether literally or metaphorically, if they're serious about the spiritual life; Going Forth from their parents yes, even literally going away from them. But we don't insist on their being on bad terms with their parents. In fact, on the other hand, we insist on them trying to be on good terms with their parents. Because the relationship, the emotional relationship, with parents is such, especially perhaps with mother, that if it isn't good it has to be bad. It can't be neutral. You can't be neutral about your mother; or about your father even; or your brothers and sisters. You either hate their guts or you love them deeply. Or maybe there's a bit of a mixture of both. You can't be neutral really about your parents. So you've got to be positive because from a spiritual point of view you can't afford to be negative. So you've got to have a positive relationship with your parents. Which doesn't necessarily mean that you stay with them; it certainly doesn't mean that you don't go forth from them when the time comes, when your own development demands that.

Dharmananda: In the context of supporting his mother, would a bhikkhu be recommended to actively seek alms to support her, or would he ... ?

S: Well, what it would mean in practice would be that the bhikkhu would collect double. This is quite a common practice; quite often a bhikkhu will go out from the monastery, from the vihara, and beg because bowls are quite big not only for himself, but maybe [also] for his teacher or for a brother disciple. Maybe they're busy. Maybe they're sick. So it is not unusual for a bhikkhu to beg for more food than is required just for himself. So instead of begging for, say, his teacher or for his brother disciples, he'll beg for himself and his mother, and supply his mother with food out of his alms-bowl.

Kulananda: That's quite interesting. I've recently come to think of the fact that at some point I might actually have to support my parents economically; and I think quite a few of us might at some point have to think in those terms.

[62]
S: Or at least help the parents; because they wouldn't starve, presumably, under the Welfare State.

Kulananda: Well, it depends where they live. (S: Yes.) But thinking in those terms would bring a whole new dimension to the coops.

S: Except that there might be a bit of a difference inasmuch as one didn't have a begging-bowl. You see what I mean? Supposing the bhikkhu he's just supporting his mother out of his begging bowl. He doesn't really modify his basic pattern of life at all. He just begs a bit extra. But if one of the modern conditions was having to work and earn in order to support one's parents, it might involve quite a modification of one's way of life. But the principle is there that even if one is committed to the spiritual life, even to the extent of being a monk, that doesn't necessarily exempt one from all responsibility towards one's parents, especially, it's said, one's mother.

Mike Howes: In the Buddha's time was it less likely that a father would become destitute? Would society hold a father up, a man up, more readily? Give him food or something? Or is it just this sort of close psychological link with mother?

Prajnananda: Women tend to live longer than men.

S: No, I don't think so; not under, as it were, natural conditions. In India, for instance, mortality and length of life among women is shorter than among men. In industrial societies, yes, the female outlives the male, the woman outlives the man. But not, apparently, in pre-industrial societies. First of all there's the repeated incidence of childbirth, which is quite a risk. And then there is the fact that perhaps the woman has been worn out by repeated childbirths and has worked hard as well in a way that perhaps the man hasn't had to. So normally in preindustrial societies I think the male outlives the female. So it can't be for that reason.

It is probably simply that Buddhist tradition recognizes a greater bond with the mother, a greater emotional tie, and a greater debt, and therefore a greater obligation. I mean, the mother has done more for you than even the father; though maybe that is a bit disputable, because one could say the father has perhaps taken you over from mother and made a real man of you. It's perhaps very difficult to compare the one with the other. But if mother hasn't made a good job of you, well, father's going to have much more difficulty making a man of you if mother hasn't brought you up to be a healthy, emotionally positive child. And if she isn't willing to let you go when the time arrives.

So it's as though one can't really deny or negate these basic human ties. They can't just be neutral. They are ties. So one has to transform them and make them positive if they are negative in any way. If one has got negative feelings towards one's parents, surely that will hold one back; because [63] if one is negative towards one's parents it means one is very negative. One doesn't do things by halves. You might think that you just don't care about your parents, or that you're just sort of neutral. Well, I think the chances are that if you think that, then probably there's quite a lot of negative feeling towards your parents of which you're not conscious. Because the natural thing, so to speak, the natural, healthy, happy and human thing, is just to be on good terms with one's parents; assuming them to have been themselves

happy, healthy and human. It's the natural thing to feel positively towards one's parents. If you don't: well, something has gone wrong somewhere along the line. And you'll be left with a residue of negative feeling that you need to put right if you are to develop as an individual. (Pause)

So the verse says: 'He who, though sufficiently well-off' he's not got the excuse that he himself is poor 'does not support' which also means 'nourish', 'cherish'; it's not just making them an allowance and forgetting all about them; it's a more positive word than that; it's basically nourishing, cherishing and supporting 'either mother or father, (though they are) decayed and no longer young: this is a cause of decline'. It suggests a lack of natural feeling where one would imagine the feeling was most due; a lack of metta, a lack of compassion. (Long Pause)

Dharmananda: It's interesting that it says in brackets: 'though they are,' rather than: 'now that they are .. '

S: Ah, I put it in brackets to make the meaning fully clear. You see, Pali's constructed rather differently from English. If one wants to make it completely literal one would have to say: 'either mother or father, decayed and no longer young'. That is filled out, one fills out the sentence to make the meaning completely clear in English. In Pali that sort of thing isn't necessary, because it's an inflected language.

Sumitra: It seems to me that a negative feeling towards your parents is more prevalent certainly in this country than it would appear to be in others.

S: I would say that is correct so far as India is concerned. I've noticed though that within the FWBO there's been a lot of clearing up of negative feelings towards parents. There's very much less of that sort of thing around now than there was some years ago. I think people have taken this point quite seriously, and in many cases have actually worked on their relationships with their parents with quite positive results.

Mike Howes: Modern psychology seems to attribute a lot of psychological disturbance to the relationship between mother and child being poor in the early years.

S: Well, if mother hasn't brought you up properly, later on in life you will just have to bring mother up properly! (Laughter)

[64]
Sumitra: Actually, that's quite interesting, 'cause at the moment I'm about halfway through The Feminine Mystique [by Betty Friedan]. Well, I find it fascinating just in terms of an analysis of conditioning processes, and it really puts across very clearly the lack of real meaning for women in their married situation, and it seems that that is a Western problem rather than ...

S: No babies. I think a lot of it is due to that.

Mike Howes: Well, fewer babies. Two rather than five.

S: Yes. Right. Or ten.

Kulananda: Washing-machines and supermarkets.

Sumitra: I don't know. I think it goes deeper than that, somehow.

S: Well, I think also it's to some extent connected with the nuclear family. The woman is much more isolated than she was in the larger family unit: the extended family, for instance. I was making the point to someone the other day that in India the majority of our Indian Order Members don't have any difficulty going off on tours: lecture tours and so on leaving their wives for a week or two, because they're firmly embedded in a quite large extended family group, and [they're] not leaving them in isolation, maybe with a couple of kids in a small flat. They're leaving them with ten or twelve other people; so that they've got company. They're not so dependent for companionship on the husband. The only two Order Members who did have trouble I don't know whether they are still having it; they did have it a couple of years ago were, significantly, those who had nuclear family setups. When they went off the wife was left alone with the children. I thought that quite a significant correlation.

Kulananda: I wonder if there hasn't been a change in the West in the conditions of women, the conditions that women live in, which mightn't have brought about a change in consciousness which is almost of an evolutionary nature i.e. you can no longer suggest that the kinds of problems that women are facing are as a result of not living a natural life; that there's actually been a change in women's nature as a result of the change in the conditions that women have lived in.

S: I don't think there has been a change in women's nature. But I think a change of nature of that sort though I don't deny that that's possible takes place over a comparatively long period of time. But I think if the existing conditions persist that is to say, if women continue not to have children, or not to have so many children as before; and I think that is the main factor that their nature, so to speak, will change. I don't think that has happened yet, but it could happen.

But the main question that then arises: Well, if they're not preoccupied with children, what do they do with their [65] lives? Well, some women have careers. A few women might even think in terms of working on themselves. But I think a lot of women, so far at least, they think more in terms of clinging on more desperately to their man and spending more time with him. They become dependent on him, preoccupied with him, rather than, as they would have been perhaps, with their babies, with their children. It is significant I notice this moving between India and England women in England seem to demand much more attention from men. And they seem to be much more dependent on that attention from men than they are in India. In India they don't seem bothered. They're, as it were, quite self-contained. Yes, they've got their husband or they've got men in the family; they are there, and they do give definite strong security. But they're not constantly looking for attention from men. They don't seem to well, they don't - depend on it in the neurotic way in which women here depend upon it. I don't know about other countries so much, but I certainly observe this here.

Kulananda: So you could say perhaps that we're in a stage where women are in a stage of evolutionary instability, in this transition from one state to ...

S: Well, they're in a state of instability well, in some societies. Don't forget there's a lot of women even in our society who are not in this position. We mustn't generalize from the

women who come along to the FWBO. But there is a certain amount of instability. It could be an opportunity for evolution. But it's only an opportunity; and as an opportunity it's got to be seized by the individual woman.

Kulananda: Because I mean it does seem desirable that women procreate less.

S: Another development which doesn't seem very healthy is that this maybe is more in the States that women get more into sex. Sex becomes more important. They become almost neurotically interested in it, or dependent upon it; their lives seem to revolve around it in a hectic, neurotic sort of way.

Kulananda: It's extraordinary! I've noticed in the last few days I don't know why there's been a real upsurge in talk about sex, writing about sex, novels about sex, at quite a serious sort of level. Well, like the Guardian women's page! (Laughter)

S: Well, genuinely serious writing about sex is all right, because it's something which has to be given serious attention, especially if changes have taken place in that area. There's certainly a lot being written. And I think much of it by women. I read in the train between Delhi and Poona of all places Fear of Flying [by Erica Jong]. I found it quite interesting. It's quite readable. It's quite amusingly written. But I couldn't help ending up feeling rather sorry for the woman, getting herself into that sort of mess. It did seem a mess: [66] this series of affairs and the way that she was into them. She seemed a bit neurotically preoccupied with the whole subject and seemed to be a bit aware of that at the end but not quite sure what to do about it.

Kulananda: It's almost taken on a sort of serious spiritual mystique for women. It's as if, if you get the sex right, everything else will follow.

S: Yes. I have come to this definite conclusion: that sex is overvalued in our society, in our culture; perhaps much more in the States than I think it is here.

Sumitra: Well, I feel it's been developed almost as a tool for manipulation in advertising.

Kulananda: It's the ultimate commodity.

Sumitra: Well, it's the ultimate lever.

Dharmananda: But advertising, surely, is using something that's already there. I don't think advertising could create a society that depends on sex.

Sumitra: No, because advertising can generate an interest and create an awareness; and by constantly presenting that image and that stimulation, so you develop a craving.

S: I think that sort of sexual advertising that is to say, advertising which makes use of sexual symbols or straightforward sexual appeal or association of sex with certain commodities I think that is only possible because people do attach an exaggerated importance to sex or are already overpreoccupied with it. But then, of course, the advertising reinforces the preoccupation so that there's a vicious circle. It just builds up.

Mike Howes: It seems that Freud's got a lot to answer for. He seems to have started off this whole ...

S: I think one could say that it wouldn't be a bad thing in a way if people were less conscious of sex, or sexual possibilities or implications.

Kulananda: It would certainly simplify so much.

S: Reading biographies of certain Victorians one is aware that they were very often some of the most prominent Victorians skating on what was really very thin ice indeed, sexually speaking. But they seem completely unaware of it! Whereas we are made aware of it; and become so self-conscious about it that we sort of lose our balance and plunge through that very thin ice. Or even comparatively thick ice.

Chris Harper: I remember when I was in Glasgow with Prajnananda [at a trade fair] recently we met a young woman [67] who had a baby in her arms and she was recently married; and she was really positive. And you could see that at the back of her mind was the certainty that there was no threat [to her in the situation]; because here was the baby to prove that there was no innuendo. Whereas if she didn't have that baby it would be very difficult to communicate so openly because of the innuendo associated with that. I think that preoccupation with sex and so on is very detrimental to real communication.

S: Well, judging by some of the writings of American origin that one reads, a lot of the women there in the feminist movement or women's liberation movement are not even just concerned with sex; they are concerned with the orgasm. And they seem to have an unhealthy sort of preoccupation with that.

Prajnananda: Do you think it is something to do with contraception? That sex has become an end in itself, rather than a means to procreation?

S: There does seem to be a tendency of that sort. It's almost as though in some of these feminist circles the ideal is a sort of uninterrupted orgasm. And then, of course, they've got all this discussion between vaginal and clitoral orgasms, etc, etc. And not only this, but a certain amount of polemic about it: Which is natural? Which is better? Whether one was not forced on them by men? Etc, etc.

Voice: They're not sure if one of them exists or not.

S: That's right; they're also not sure whether it actually exists. There's really, I feel, an unhealthy preoccupation with these things.

Kulananda: It does seem to stem from the idea that if one is sexually gratified one is psychologically healthy. There does seem to be that idea prevalent in society at the moment.

Sumitra: How do you feel about, say, something like the suffragette movement?

S: Well, that tended to be more for 'Votes for Women', didn't it?

Sumitra: Yes, precisely. But it was a question of emancipating women from a position that

was quite clearly inequitable. It was an imposition from a male-dominated society and it quite clearly was unjust.

S: Well, one could say that it was a male-dominated society. But I think it's too easily assumed nowadays without the preliminary intellectual work that a male-dominated society is necessarily an unjust and undesirable society. I think this is an assumption which very few people have really worked out for themselves. They haven't really thought about it, least of all some of the feminists. It is assumed that women have the same [68] rights as men. Well, have they? I think that should be thrashed out first. Also there's the question of identical rights or corresponding rights. Do you see what I mean? That also needs to be systematically questioned.

Kulananda: Even the question of rights at all.

S: Yes, even the very question of rights one could question.

Sumitra: Well, one would acknowledge that perhaps there has been an over-reaction in the opposite direction. But one can also see that there must be a strong feeling of having been subjugated; because in the past that has been the case.

S: Well, I think that is all based on assumptions. I think they're all assumptions which need to be examined; as all assumptions need to be examined. I mean, women in India to drag in that example again, because I am familiar with India they don't feel subjugated, though a Western woman going there and observing them would say that they were subjugated and ought to be liberated and would try perhaps to make them dissatisfied with their condition; might even succeed. But ..

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Cassette Four, Side Two

Sumitra: ... Padmasuri's article in the latest Shabda would seem to suggest that the Indian women aren't in fact totally enamoured of their lot.

S: Well, I think one must realize that Padmasuri is looking at Indian women very much through Western spectacles. It may be that, yes, some Indian women do have a very hard time, and they would wish that they had a less hard time; but that does not necessarily mean that they are dissatisfied with their lot in the feminist sense.

Kulananda: Or that their husbands impose on them in a way which they consider unjust.

S: Quite. I mean, their categories, their criteria, their values, are different.

Sumitra: The reason that I pursue that point is 'cause it seems to be so easy to slip into and fall into the position where you almost write women off in a really quite off-hand manner. I mean, I find myself doing it, and I'm not sure that it's altogether a positive thing to do. And I can't help feeling that you have to pin down exactly what is going on.

S: Well, I would say, from the opposite point of view, having made vigorous efforts over the

years to 'write women on', and having found those efforts really not very successful, I begin to wonder: Well, is there not some objective limitation in [69] women themselves? This is my personal line of approach. I mean, I accept - on faith, so to speak - what the Buddha says: that women can gain Enlightenment too. But I have sometimes said that if there was not that word of the Buddha in the scriptures which I accept I might be tempted to doubt whether women could gain Enlightenment.

Sumitra: There always seems to be the difficulty in that discussion: that you're trying to speak of, one speaks of women in general, and then you have particular instances of very capable women ...

S: I think it is a question of having to decide, whether in the case of men or women, to what extent the more, as it were, capable or developed specimens are typical or representative. I mean, there are plenty of men who are not spiritually developed or evolved and don't wish to be, etc, etc. But perhaps it should give one food for thought that we do have more men seriously involved in or committed to the Dharma within the FWBO than women. We've got quite a lot of women around, but we've got more committed men. We've got more men Order Members, in short. I think that fact is not without significance, [not] perhaps without some general significance.

Kulananda: Though we can't deny that that fact is of necessity as a result of a combination of biological and sociological conditionings.

S: I don't see, in the case of, say, women coming along now, especially women from the sort of background that they do come along from in the Friends, that there is anything sociological. There's no obstacle to a woman taking up meditation, leaving home if she wants, etc, etc. She can do it. It would seem to me that the obstacles are entirely biological or, to the extent that they are psychological, are biologically linked.

Kulananda: I think you can argue a fairly fine case though, based, for example, on language, through social anthropology: that a woman grows up with a different view of herself, which is, as it were, socialized.

S: Yes, but it is a socialization of a biological-cum-psychological difference which is there. (Kulananda: Right, yes.) It is not purely arbitrary. It is not something which has been arbitrarily imposed on women whereas it perhaps could just as well have been imposed on men. It is not so much an imposition as an expression.

Kulananda: But one could also argue that, under different conditions, women would develop differently, although obviously the biological factor would still play a very, very large part.

S: Well, one would argue the same about men too. But supposing you improved conditions both for men and for women [70] it would seem because of the biological difference, [that] spiritually speaking men would still do better than women. So that leaves us exactly where we were.

Kulananda: Except that people might argue that women have had a rougher time than men have, that society has worked to man's advantage rather than to women's and that's not ...

S: I think you could argue exactly the other way round: that society has been organized for the benefit of women so that they could have their babies and be supported, etc, etc.

Kulananda: So men haven't been able to go off and lead the spiritual life.

Mike Howes: Have any religions found a lot of women or an equal number of women taking a leading part in ... ?

S: Well, yes and no. In the Catholic Church for instance - I don't know how far one can compare - there are twice as many nuns as there are monks and priests. So what is one to make of that?

Sumitra: Well, Christianity is basically more devotional than Buddhism.

S: Well, this makes all sorts of assumptions about the nature of women. You can say that the symbolism is more family-oriented. That, of course, makes other assumptions about the nature of women and indirectly about the nature of men.

Chris Harper: It's always seemed to me that Christianity is in some way more beneficial to women that it is to men. I don't really know why; I haven't gone into it.

S: Well, it doesn't admit them to the priesthood. It holds up before them the ideal of a virgin mother, which is something that they couldn't possibly be! (Laughter) Virgin -yes! Mother - yes! But not virgin mother. In other words, it holds up before them a completely unfulfillable ideal.

Kulananda: And the boss was a man.

S: Yes: God is male and Jesus is male. Even the Holy Ghost, I believe, is male well, except for some heretical sects.

Chris Harper: Yeah. But for some reason female Christians that I know seem to actually become better off as it were and develop slightly, I say that loosely whereas the men I know that have been involved in Christianity are quite weak and wishy-washy, perhaps almost becoming quite feminine in the negative sense. Do you know what I mean?

S: Well, about which country are we speaking?

Chris Harper: I'm talking about people that I know, [71] Christians in this country.

S: What about the priests? Do you leave them out?

Chris Harper: Well, yeah. I don't know any!

S: Well, it's a well-known phenomenon that older women do take to religion in the West and are the mainstay of the Church to a great extent. They seem to depend very much on the male priesthood, perhaps in a not quite healthy sort of way; perhaps in a very unhealthy sort of way. Anyway, how did we get on to this subject?

Prajnananda: Families mothers.

Sumitra: Ah yes! There was the question about bringing up of children. There was a discussion ...

S: (Interrupting) ... your attitude towards your parents when you're adult is determined to a great extent by the way in which you're brought up as a child by your parents. How did woman creep in?

Sumitra: Well, by being a mother, I think.

S: What was the exact connection? That they didn't have to always be mothers or mothers so frequently. Someone brought up this question of whether women lived longer than men. Ah! Supporting your mother whether that was because father had always died earlier. No, I said; because women usually live shorter lives than men in pre-industrial societies, partly because they have to produce so many children. Then someone said that situation has changed now for women. That got on to a general discussion mindfully, I hope about the possibility of a sort of new mutation of the female species.

Well, one could say that, because women nowadays don't have to have so many children even don't have to have any at all if they don't want to and since they're not restricted in the way that they used to be, while still retaining many of their old advantages, they have in many cases an excellent opportunity to develop themselves. Whether they wish to do that is, I think, quite another matter. A lot of them in the women's movement seem to be preoccupied with other things; they perhaps think of development in quite different terms. And in their conception of development sex seems to play a very important part, if not the most important part; the dominant part in fact. And not only sex but more specifically orgasm.

Of course, they're very much preoccupied with the question of abortion, aren't they? A lot of discussion about that. For instance, there's a little article by Teresa; I don't know whether she's circulated it generally but she's sent me a copy. And she's been quite impressed by a statement of Kapleau [Philip Kapleau, an American Zen Roshi] in a recent book apropos of abortion: that according to the Mahayana there is no absolute right to life. So he sort of gives some support to [72] abortion. So she has sort of seized hold of that. But it was interesting to me; I also saw this passage in his book Zen: Dawn in the West [Rider & Co, London, 1980: pages 244/258]. He makes this statement: that in Mahayana Buddhism there is no absolute right to life. Now he doesn't quote any sutra to that effect, which to me is very, very suspicious to begin with; because on a momentous issue like this you should surely quote your sources, you should surely quote the Mahayana sutras. But what is even more suspicious to me is his use of the expression 'absolute right'; or 'right' ...

Kulananda: What on earth does he mean?

S: ... Because it doesn't correspond to anything in traditional Buddhist thinking. There's no Sanskrit or Pali word for 'right' in that sense. In modern India when they speak of rights they don't use a word of Sanskrit or Sanskritik origin. They have to import a word from Urdu, from Persian and Arabic. They use the word hak. 'Mera hak hai' 'It's my right'. You can't say that, I think, in pure Hindi. So the idea of rights is foreign to Indian traditions, foreign to Buddhism. The emphasis is all on duties. So if you find someone saying that according to

Mahayana Buddhism there is no absolute right to life, well, you are justified in suspecting the authenticity of his presentation of Mahayana Buddhism, especially when he quotes no texts. So it would seem very much a sort of accommodation to the sort of feminist lobby, the pro-abortion lobby. You're suggesting that, well, this narrow-minded old Theravada might be against abortion, but not the broad liberal Mahayana. According to the Mahayana there is no absolute right to life; OK, according to the Mahayana, abortion is justified. I think this is very, very dangerous. And quite unfaithful to Mahayana Buddhism.

Prajnananda: What sort of context is he talking in when this occurs?

S: As far as I remember, it's in response to a question about abortion that he makes this point. But Teresa has read this book and she seizes hold of this point and embodies it in the article; not a bad little article, but when the question of abortion comes up, she seems to lose some of her clarity. She's clear and quite reasonable up to that point, but then the whole article seems to go a bit to pieces. Anyway, we're going to have tea together shortly and I'll take the opportunity of discussing the matter with her.

Also I've noticed that in one or two places, and also in letters that I've had from women, that they mention the fact that in my opinion abortion is murder. But that's not the case at all. It is not my opinion. This is the Buddhist tradition. But sometimes it's quoted as 'Bhante's opinion', thereby trying to sidetrack the fact that this is the Buddhist tradition. So yes, if you wish, you are at liberty to disagree with the Buddhist tradition, but if you are a Buddhist you have to face up to the fact: well, that is the Buddhist tradition: that abortion is included in murder, is regarded as [73] the taking of human life.

So, yes, the right to disagreement well, perhaps one shouldn't use the term 'right' at all in this case the possibility of disagreement exists. But one mustn't ignore what tradition actually says. This is not my interpretation or my own particular view or opinion this is what the Buddhist tradition definitely says. So if you disagree, if you believe in abortion, you have to contradict that tradition. You must be aware that you're doing that. Tradition may be right; it may be wrong. But that is the tradition. So you have to take that fact into consideration.

Sumitra: Where would you find reference to that in the literature?

S: To abortion? (Sumitra: Yes.) In the Vinaya Pitaka, where the monastic rule is discussed. It is made quite clear there that if the bhikkhu procures an abortion or assists in an abortion he has committed one of the most serious offences, that is the taking of human life. And of course the bhikkhu is regarded as practising the same ethics as the ordinary lay Buddhist, but practising to a much greater degree, much more strictly, much more uncompromisingly. So in that respect the bhikkhu is the norm; the ethics of the bhikkhu constitute the norm. Anything that falls short of that is a compromise.

Kulananda: But that would suggest that celibacy, for example, was the way ...

S: Yes. (Pause)

Kulananda: Gosh! Doesn't say a lot for the future of the species!

S: It doesn't say a lot for the future of the species on this particular level of existence. It

doesn't preclude the possibility of the species continuing to exist on a higher, a-sexual, level, i.e. on the rupaloka or the arupaloka. (Pause) We learnt about those on the [preordination] course [in Tuscany] didn't we? Rupaloka? Arupaloka?

Sumitra: Yes. I was just considering when you said that: that I was under the impression that human birth was one of the most auspicious, in that suffering and pleasure being almost equally balanced it was the existence in which you were most likely to get in touch with or be able to practise the Dharma.

S: Right. Yes.

Sumitra: So that if the species did die out ...

S: But it could only die out in the sense that it had reached as a whole a level of development such that re-embodiment or rebirth on the kamaloka plane was no longer appropriate, was no longer helpful.

[74]
Sumitra: But I was also under the impression that ...

S: (Interrupting) There are various possibilities of rebirth for the various, let's say, 'consciousnesses' in process of evolution at present. And for the vast majority of them rebirth as a human being, as a not bisexual; what would you call it? disexual human being is, constitutes, the best sort of opportunity. But supposing [that] as a result of those human births people all develop, they reach a sort of androgynous state, they are no longer sexually differentiated; then human birth would not be the best possibility for them. A better possibility would be rebirth on a higher asexual plane, androgynous plane, from which they could ascend even higher.

Chris Harper: If you take the idea that rebirth in a human existence is at the moment a pretty good existence to be reborn in, perhaps if you're also taking the Bodhisattva ideal literally it would be good to procreate - to allow others to have a chance of ...

S: Well, yes, you could say logically that follows: supposing you are a bodhisattva you're really well qualified to be a father. Because if you as a bodhisattva assuming your wife is of comparable spiritual status procreate children, well, they're likely to grow up under quite ideal conditions. So, yes, one could I'm quite ready to acknowledge that. It seems quite logical. But it also means that those who are not bodhisattvas should think very carefully about procreating children, because perhaps they're not really very well qualified.

But this also brings us back perhaps rather neatly to this question of mother, father and parenthood. I think actually that still in the West in modern times people go much too casually into parenthood. I think they should think much more seriously than they actually do. I think it's partly at least partly because they take it with so little seriousness that it doesn't work out so well. I think if they're going to live that life at all they should really think and plan for being parents and having children much more seriously and conscientiously than they do, asking themselves: 'Well, are we really fit to be parents? If not, [then] how can we fit ourselves to be parents? How can we ensure that we have really healthy children; that we're in a position to give them a very positive environment in which to grow up? Are we really

determined to do the very best that we possibly can for our children? Are we going to take it as a real responsibility and do our best?' That sort of attitude is comparatively lacking. There's quite a bit of it in India: this sort of attitude. They really do take their duties as parents very seriously. They really do the best that they can for their children. They've very strong positive feelings for their children in a way that people here very often just don't have.

Kulananda: A lot of people here expect that having children is not really going to change their lives.

[75]
S: So often it just happens accidentally. The mere fact that a woman is thinking whether to have an abortion or not well, what sort of mental state is she in with regard to the possibility of children? A woman who is really well-fitted to be a mother couldn't even think of an abortion. Because what does it suggest? What sort of mental attitude? There's one little sentence in Teresa's article which I quite liked, which I thought was in a way quite penetrating. She said that it was quite a thought that for the modern person, the modern woman, every time you had sexual intercourse it might end in your taking life that is to say if the woman decided to have an abortion. So she rightly considered that a sobering thought. But it seems I think it's regrettable that that possibility is there.

Kulananda: So in some ways for a woman who's not prepared to have children the only responsible alternative is chastity.

S: Yes well, Teresa herself seems to be thinking almost along those lines; at least she recognizes that her own logic points in that direction, though she's not as yet completely happy about that direction. But she does acknowledge that that is the logic of the situation.

Kulananda: It's where logic bumps up against emotions quite strongly. (S: Mmmm, yes.)

Mike Howes: Is there a traditional view on contraception?

S: No there isn't because contraceptives were apparently unknown in India in the Buddha's time.

But you see the situation: this overvaluation of sex? [That] you must have sex at all costs. You don't want to have children. Sometimes contraceptives aren't successful. Ok: you're practically landed with abortion whether you like it or not. It's not really a very pleasant situation. As I was saying, very often women become pregnant by accident and they're not sure whether they want to have the child or not. It isn't the result of planning or a real desire for the child. So maybe they have it. Maybe they're not married. Maybe they resent that situation or maybe they get married after they get pregnant. It's all a bit messy. The Indians seem to have things just so much better organized. I don't think it's possible, at this stage anyway, to just try to copy that system. I don't think we could do that. But clearly we are in a bit of a mess as regards these aspects of life and we have to find some way out.

Kulananda: Perhaps we're in a state where we actually have contradictory needs real needs which are contradictory.

S: Some women in the women's liberation movement have almost - well, have - got into the

state of mind of thinking that it's not fair that women should have to have babies - 'Why should we be saddled?' because they're so alienated from their own nature, biologically speaking.

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Dharmananda: And therefore she asserts that she has a 'right to choose'.

S: Yes. If she thinks of herself as someone with the right to choose, that really suggests that she's quite alienated from her actual concrete nature.

Kulananda: Gosh, that's interesting! There's a consciousness going on where the body is in another area all together.

S: Yes.

Sumitra: In that statement of Teresa's that for a woman every time she has sex she could be in the position where she's going to take a human life doesn't that also apply to the man involved?

S: Yes! Well, to the extent that he is involved in the decision to have the abortion or not. But it does seem well, women themselves insist nowadays that it is primarily the women's responsibility; or, they say 'right to choose'. But he of course is involved at the beginning of the process even though he may not necessarily be involved at the end. But even if he wants the woman to have an abortion she doesn't necessarily have to agree. She has to agree; so it's basically her decision. And if he's not married to her, he has no say whatever in the matter legally.

Kulananda: You've got a situation at the moment which seems as if you've got women's consciousness going in one direction and her body, as it were, stuck in another dimension; there's a split between the two. Now how does that come about? And how can one begin to bring the two closer together?

S: Well, I think the two can only be brought closer together by first of all the woman recognizing that she's a woman, and recognizing that she is identified to a great extent with her body and its needs and its mode of functioning.

Kulananda: And maybe through childbirth.

S: I wouldn't like to say that every woman should have children and [that] she can't be positive and healthy without them. I think there are some women though no doubt they're a minority who don't have this sort of maternal instinct as strongly as the majority of women. But I think for the majority of women it's a major decision not to have children and if a woman wants to develop as an individual, wants to lead a spiritual life, I don't think it's therefore a straightforward decision that children are out. I don't think it works as simply as that.

I think from what I've seen of women who have had children and women who haven't had them, that it's probably wiser for her to sort of 'give in', so to speak, a little bit to her womanly nature and to have children, even though she is also quite genuinely concerned with her

spiritual development. If [77] she really wants children as well as wanting to evolve spiritually I don't think she necessarily - well, I'm pretty certain she doesn't speed up the process of spiritual development just by not having children. I don't think it works in that way. Again, I'm not saying [that] if she has them that will definitely contribute; I don't say that either. But I think probably that in the long run it'll be easier and more straightforward for her to evolve, if she still wants to evolve, if she has or has had children.

Mike Howes: The assumption seems to be that having children is detrimental to one's spiritual development; they somehow get in the way.

S: Yes. Well, they do get in your way if you're a mother; there's no doubt about that. So you have to recognize this situation, and it may be that in the long run it is better for you to have children who 'get in your way' in that sort of way for a short while; because maybe not having them will 'get in your way' in another way all the more. So it's not a very easy decision for a woman who genuinely wants to develop to make: to have or not to have children.

But as far as I've seen, those who have taken the decision to have children, or who've happened to have had children, haven't really been held back, I think, in the long run; I'm almost certain they haven't. They just to have to accept this is what I tell them now quite positively and willingly, that for a couple of years, that is the first two years of the child's life, the child has to be their main interest and responsibility. They won't be able to go on retreats. They should just put it out of their mind, postpone all that. Otherwise there's too much conflict involved.

And the two years usually goes pretty quickly. And they can keep in contact with their friends within the Movement and be back in circulation after a couple of years. This has actually happened in a few cases. It does seem to work. So I don't think that a woman necessarily evolves spiritually just by bypassing that particular biological need.

Chris Harper: I understand that in the East the average Eastern woman, the Hindu woman, goes through perhaps four stages of development in her life during which she has and brings up a family and so on. And then the responsibility is kind of ... When she doesn't carry that responsibility any more, the last part of her life she spends most of her time in prayer and so on well, following the spiritual life.

S: Well, that's the schema according to what they call the four a
ramas; and in theory that applies to both men and women. In practice it applies to the extent that it does apply more to men than to women. But it's true: there's quite a lot of women maybe more in India than in this country [who] end up or [who] spend the latter part of their lives involved in purely religious activities. They do quite a bit of meditation.

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This does differ from community to community and caste to caste. It's probably more common among the higher castes. Well, it means the woman has to be supported, for one thing; there have to be people to support her. Among the very poor, among the lower castes, a woman may still be working for her living when she's very old, right up to the time of her death.

Mike Howes: Two years seems a very short period I must say.

S: Yes. Well, [it's] not that after that you've no responsibility, but it's only for two years that the child really demands all your time and all your energy. But after that you can begin to leave the child, at least for a weekend, while you, say, go on retreat. But otherwise the mother is on call night and day. I studied certain mothers quite carefully and talked to them about this. There's no doubt about it. And they have to accept this; they mustn't resent it. (Pause)

Kulananda: Gosh, yes. Resentment in the first two years of life can really do bad things to a child.

Dharmananda: You see that quite a lot [in the East End of London] with women pushing kids around when they're shopping. You've got a little kid in a pushchair and there's a hell of a lot of resentment coming between the two, and if the kid's being a bit awkward they really get a very sharp rejoinder.

S: ... Impatient. You don't see that in India. You just don't see it.

Kulananda: I notice with the Indian families here, there's a completely different relationship between the parents and children.

S: This is one aspect of a whole philosophy of human social relations and the nature of marriage [and] the nature of the family. But the system as a whole does work, there's no doubt about that, and works quite well. (Long Pause) Anyway, perhaps we'd better leave it there for tonight so we can all go to bed. You haven't got to get up in the morning, have you? Not for work anyway?

Several voices: Oh yes, yes! (Laughter)

Voice: What's tomorrow?

Sumitra: Sunday: Camden Lock market!

End of Cassette Four, Side Two

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Cassette Five, Side One

SESSION THREE

Cassette Five, Side One (Start of session missing due to recording fault)

S: ... the brahmanas usually had more respect for the Vedas; perhaps they even performed Vedic rituals. They lived in the forests; they lived in little settlements; more often than not they lived with their wives and families. Perhaps they practised meditation. They were more like spiritually-minded householders.

The sramanas on the other hand the word literally means 'those who are washed', 'those who are pure' the sramanas did not accept the authority of the Vedas. They were not in the Vedic

tradition; they did not observe Vedic rituals; they did not accept the Vedic or Veda based caste system as the brahmans usually did. And they were more often than not non-householders and therefore wanderers, which the brahmanas usually were not. Do you see what I mean? So there is also some difference of lifestyle, that is to say the householder spiritual devotee and the wanderer spiritual devotee.

So sramana-brahmana comprises both of these. When one speaks of sramana-brahmana one means all those who are leading a spiritual life, whether affiliated to the Vedas or not; whether living at home or not; whether living in a settlement in the forest or wandering from place to place. The reference is to all such people who are following any kind of higher life, any kind of spiritual life, regardless of specific belief, regardless of lifestyle, as we would say.

Kulananda: Is modern Hinduism a continuance of the brahmana tradition?

S: It is a continuance of the brahmana tradition rather than of the sramana tradition, very much so. But it's a continuation which has undergone very great changes. One can't really speak of 'Hinduism' as existing in the Buddha's time. 'Hinduism' is a later, almost medieval, development. This point has been stressed in a number of books recently published by modern Indian scholars that it is quite inappropriate to speak of Hinduism as existing in the Buddha's time. There was the Vedic tradition; there were various traditions and practices and cults connected with that. One cannot speak of Hinduism; Hinduism is an essentially Puranic phenomenon. The Puranas are a later type of Hindu scripture telling the stories of the gods and so on. In Vedic Hinduism you don't get Rama and Krsna; you don't get Siva and Parvati; certainly not in their late developed mythological forms. You don't get temples and temple worship.

Mike Howes: So Hinduism isn't strictly speaking as old as Buddhism?

S: No, strictly speaking not. And Hinduism even owes a lot to Buddhism. It took over, it incorporated, many features of Buddhism: images and image worship appear first in Buddhism [80] and then in Hinduism. This is not generally understood. The earlier images were Buddha images - leaving aside the little figurines discovered at Harappa, which belong to a different civilization altogether.

Kulananda: So this puts the notion that the Buddhist Tantra is a development of the Hindu Tantra a bit in question.

S: Yes, it's usually considered that the Buddhist Tantras came first; but that is relating to one particular phase of both Buddhism and Hinduism. Certainly Buddhism came before what now passes under the name of Hinduism, which includes some surviving Vedic elements, some elements drawn from Buddhism, and some developed from or drawn from medieval, Puranic, and then later on Tantric, Hinduism.

Mike Howes: Presumably Hindu historians wouldn't necessarily acknowledge that?

S: Orthodox Hindus probably wouldn't acknowledge that. They regard it as one continuous development of one religion existing for thousands upon thousands of years. But the changes it has undergone are such [that] one cannot really speak of one and the same religion.

Kulananda: So was the sramana tradition then more yogic?

S: Yes, though again one can't generalize too much or be too rigid here because in the brahmana tradition some meditation was practised. The Buddha himself represents the brahmanas as familiar with dhyana states. But the sramana tradition was definitely a more independent tradition, a more vigorous tradition, a more pioneering tradition in every way. And it stressed of course the 'going forth' from home, it stressed leaving home, stressed the wandering life, stressed independence.

So in the Buddha's day there was of course the Vedic tradition existing in various forms and represented mainly by brahmanas of varying degrees of sincerity and spiritual attainment. And there were the various sramana traditions or rather sramana teachings and teachers. [Traditionally] there were six of these apart from the Buddha mainly mentioned in Pali texts. So to his contemporaries the Buddha was one of the most prominent, if not the most prominent, sramana leader of his day, and his movement was often confused with the sramana movement in general. He's always called 'samana Gotama'.

Prajnananda: What were the sources of spiritual inspiration for the sramanas?

S: Well, the teachings of their particular teacher.

Prajnananda: They were just independent teachers?

S: There were these wanderers, these people who'd broken free from home, who didn't acknowledge the caste system, who were [81] 'in search of truth' as we say. There were thousands, tens of thousands, of these sort of people roaming around. Some of them were particularly important and mainly from among the sramana community they recruited followers, disciples, and set up what we call their ganas or their sanghas or their spiritual communities. And sometimes they incorporated elements from among the brahmanas, sometimes enlisted brahmana disciples as the Buddha did and didn't in fact confine themselves to the sramana community, the wandering confraternity, in any way; also accepted people who were leading a lay life, so to speak. But the nucleus tended to be drawn from the sramana, the wandering, community.

Kulananda: Because here the Buddha uses the word
sramanabrahmana. He doesn't talk about bhikkhus. So he's working within the existing traditions?

S: Yes. Bhikkhu seems to be a somewhat later term. In the Dhammapada there is a verse which says: 'Even though one is richly dressed and finely adorned, if one is full of truth and righteousness, he is a
sramana, he is a brahmana, he is a bhikkhu.' As though the Buddha identified these three ideals. He tries to give a very what shall I say? He tried to upgrade the ideal of the brahmana, at least upgrade it in relation to what was practised by the brahmanas of his day he tried to upgrade the ideal of the
sramana, and to equate them with the ideal of the bhikkhu. His attitude seemed to be not to say: 'The brahmanas are wrong,' but to say: 'Well, be a good brahmana; live up to your own traditions.' Do you see what I mean? That seemed to be his tendency more.

Kulananda: Right. He was working quite differently to the way he work with Christianity then?

S: Yes; because it was obviously a quite different situation. It was much more fluid, much more healthy; one could say that. He certainly condemned their caste pretensions; there is no doubt about that. But at the same time he certainly recognized what was good in their tradition and tried to incorporate that into his own teaching.

Kulananda: Did he comment on the Vedas at any point?

S: There are constant references to 'the three Vedas'; the fourth seems not to have been collected or at least known in that form in his day. One of the points of his criticism of the brahmans is that they're not living up to their own ideals. They're not like the brahmans of ancient days.

Perhaps in our language he idealized the brahmans of ancient days to give him a handle, as it were, against the brahmans, to be able to tackle them on their own ground; to say: 'Well, you're not living up to your own ideals. [It's] not that I'm asking you to follow me; but this is what you claim to follow, this is what you profess. But you're not living up to it.' As he says: 'Well, did the ancient brahmans attain to the brahmaloka?' 'Oh yes!' 'But have you attained?' [82] 'No.' 'Has your teacher attained?' 'No' 'Has his teacher attained?' 'No.' 'Then in what sense are you a follower of those ancient brahmans?'

This was his approach: that 'You are not living up to your own tradition!' Much as we might say to a Christian: 'Well, I'm not asking you to become a Buddhist, but do you believe that God is love?' 'Yes.' 'Do you believe in turning the other cheek?' 'Oh yes.' 'Then why are you not practising that?' We could well adopt that sort of attitude so as to take over their ideal and then challenge them, ask them why they are not practising it, rather than attack them directly with Buddhism.

So these were the
sramanas and the brahmanas; one might say the traditional and the non-traditional spiritual people, or people following both traditional and non-traditional spiritual paths, between which the Buddha recognized a certain amount of common ground. So from this little discussion we can get some idea of what the Buddha is getting at when he says, for instance, here: 'Who with false words deceives a brahman or recluse.' By brahman he doesn't necessarily mean a brahman simply in the caste sense, but someone who is genuinely and sincerely following traditional Vedic spiritual ideals, the traditional Vedic path. And by sramana [he means] those who are following the non-Vedic spiritual path, especially as a homeless wanderer.

So one can raise the next question: Why does the Buddha speak of it being a source of decline if you deceive such people with false words, false speech, rather than just people in general? Let's take it that the brahmana and the
sramana here represent those who are more highly developed. So why should it be, as it seems to be here, especially bad to deceive with false words those who are more highly developed spiritually than yourself? Why should this apparently be a more serious matter than deceiving in that way others who are as it were on the same level as you or perhaps not even on the same level as you?

Chris Harper: It shows a much more serious lack of restraint in your deception the extent to which you're prepared to deceive people.

Prajnananda: It shows you're closed off to receiving anything from them or learning from them.

S: There is the general Buddhist belief, that I think was shared by others in India at the time, that from one point of view an offence was serious in accordance with the spiritual attainment or spiritual stature of the person in relation to whom it was committed. In other words, to kill an arhant would be a more serious offence than killing someone who wasn't an arhant, an unenlightened man, in the same way that killing a human being is a more serious matter than killing a dog or killing a fly or a flea.

So, in the same way, to deceive by telling a lie someone who normally you should feel great spiritual respect for and devotion towards, that is much worse; because it implies not only a breach of the sort of trust and mutual confidence which [83] should exist between all human beings, but a breach of the spiritual link between you and those who are more highly developed spiritually than you are. So you are closing yourself to their influence, you're closing yourself to their teaching, inasmuch as it's embodied in them or inasmuch as they represent it. You're closing yourself to, shutting yourself off from, the spiritual path itself, from spiritual life itself. This is what it represents.

So therefore it's always stressed in Buddhism you should be very, very careful how you behave towards, or in relation to, those who are spiritually more advanced than you are yourself, especially the Buddha, bodhisattvas, arhants, Stream Entrants and so on.

Mike Howes: Is it also perhaps a fact that if you can deceive someone like that you could deceive anyone and live your whole life in one mess of deceit?

S: Yes, right. If you cannot even be open with them ... You've nothing to fear from them, they're not going to react, they're not going to threaten you; they are quite open to you, their attitude towards you is positive but nonetheless you deceive them with false words, with false speech. So what could you deceive them about, for instance?

Mike Howes: It's pretty hard to think you could deceive a very advanced person.

S: Well, you could try or you could have the will to deceive. They might just ask you a simple question. They might ask you a direction and you might mislead them out of malice. Or they might ask you about yourself. This is considered I think particularly serious. They might ask you about your own mental state, your own spiritual practice. You might not be honest. This would be a serious matter.

There is a story I tell in this connection about the famous French nun of Kalimpong, the French lady, the academic lady, who became a Tibetan Buddhist nun for a while and gave endless trouble to Dhardo Rimpoche and various other gurus. What happened was this: She got fed up with Dhardo Rimpoche; he wouldn't teach her in the way that she wanted to be taught. So she got fed up with him and she went up to Sikkim and she was wandering about there.

It so happened that the newly-appointed - or perhaps I should say newly-discovered - abbot of the big Nyingmapa monastery at Pema yun-tze in Western Sikkim, a big palace monastery, had just arrived from Tibet and he was just going to take up his position as the abbot of that monastery. But the astrologically auspicious day hadn't arrived, so he was camping in the forest. And nobody knew he was there. This French nun didn't know he was there; she'd never even heard of him.

So wandering about in the forest in the way she used to she just came upon him, she came upon this lama, just sitting all by himself; and she couldn't help noticing he was quite an impressive character. And she knew a bit of Tibetan and they [84] got into conversation. And she soon became aware he was some sort of guru, some sort of teacher; so she thought herself very lucky. So he asked her, as Tibetans will in such circumstances, 'Who's your teacher?' because she was wearing the Tibetan maroon robe. And she said: 'Dhardo Rimpoche.' Then he asked her: 'What has Dhardo Rimpoche taught you? What meditation are you practising?' So she said 'Oh I'm practising such-and-such and such-and-such ... ' So he said: 'No you're not. You haven't been practising for six months.'

And it was true; she told me this story herself. I afterwards came to know that teacher very well; he became one of my teachers. And he knew. He actually had this sort of telepathic power; he could read her thoughts.

So she had deceived him; she hadn't been honest. She hadn't said: 'Well I'm not with my guru any more. I've given up practising the meditation he taught me.' She said that she was doing it, or had been doing it. But he knew and he said: 'No, you haven't been doing it for the last six months' which was the exact truth. And he'd never set eyes on her before, didn't know any more of her existence than she knew of his.

So this tells you something not only about the lama, whose name was Kachu Rimpoche, but about the French nun too: that she could speak to him in this way and not be really honest and staightforward with him. She sort of was with him for a while, but that also ended with misunderstandings ...

So this verse seems to stress the necessity for openness, honest dealing, with those who are more spiritually advanced than oneself. If one isn't capable of that sort of honest dealing it's a cause of downfall, it's a cause of decline. One can see why: you shut yourself off from those sources of spiritual inspiration, sources of instruction. If you can't be open with such people, well, who can you be open with? If you can't be truthful with them, if you can't be honest with them, then with whom can you be truthful and honest and open?

One example is sometimes given in the case of those who are bhikkhus, sramanas: If such people come to the door begging or they come for alms and you say: 'Oh I'm sorry, I haven't got any food in the house' when that is a lie. You are just unwilling to give. That is considered a form of this: deceiving such people with false words. That's considered a very serious matter. You are not only unwilling to give them dana, unwilling to give them a little food, but you pretend that you haven't got any food in the house, that there isn't any food available. You tell them a lie; you deceive them; you're not open with them; you're not honest. So that is a serious matter. This is a source of decline.

Sumitra: Do these verse go in a descending order of ... a more and more serious ... ?

S: It seems a bit like that; though not completely because what could be worse, one might say, than what is mentioned in the first verse: hating or detesting the Dhamma? In a way what could be worse than that? So in a way you're sort of bumping your way down the stairs. Each step is lower than the [85] preceding one. But in a way also it's difficult to say that or to apply that strictly.

Sumitra: Did you translate this verse yourself from the Pali?

S: No, I haven't done so yet, but we can do so. What would one say? It's quite straightforward: 'He who deceives a brahman or a
sramana or other religious mendicant with false words This is a source of decline.' I don't know whether one could really ... Brahmana is not really brahman in the sense of someone belonging to a particular caste. I think I'll have to find some better version of, and to paraphrase, 'brahmana or
sramana'. I'll have to think about that.

But anyway the general meaning is quite clear, isn't it? It is especially important to be truthful with those who are spiritually more advanced, inasmuch as your communication with them is correspondingly more important.

Mike Howes: I was wondering; is brahmana-sramana a generic term for these people?

S: Yes, in a very broad sense.

Mike Howes: Bringing that to the West, should we be tolerant and respectful to anyone who we can see or feel has developed, whatever they're ... ?

S: Well, if one genuinely feels that. It's not that they've necessarily got a dog-collar round their neck or anything like that. In the Indian context brahmana-sramana suggests also a certain position in society, because such people are generally recognized as worthy of respect on account of the spiritual life that they are leading. We don't have anything really quite like that in our secular modern society today.

Mike Howes: It comes across to me as really very tolerant, and I wonder whether we should be ...

S: I wouldn't say it was a question of tolerance. I think that word isn't quite appropriate here. Don't forget that, yes, the Buddha gained Enlightenment, he was teaching, he was gathering disciples, but the religious society of his day wasn't as sharply differentiated as our religious society is even now. It wasn't sharply differentiated into mutually exclusive sects and churches. That seems to be a Western, not to say Semitic well, Christian concept. Do you see what I mean?

It's not that he was being tolerant of some other sect no, because the notion of 'sect' in the Western sense just didn't exist then. There's no question of tolerance; there was nothing to be tolerant about, in his view and in the view of the early Buddhists. It was just a question of whether, in such-and-such a person, regardless of what he calls himself, whether he calls himself a
sramana or brahmana or a bhikkhu, is there truth and righteousness? That was the more

important question.

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And in a way there was a common tradition that they could all appeal to. We mustn't forget that even terms like 'buddha' were originally in general use. Even the word 'buddha' didn't have a specialized use as it had afterwards. Bhikkhu wasn't such a specialized term; brahman was not a specialized term either. (Pause)

Kulananda: So the Buddha was himself a
sramana?

S: Sometimes he describes himself as a brahmana inasmuch as he had attained to the brahmaloka, which the majority, if not all, of so-called brahmans in his day had not done. And he fulfilled their spiritual ideal not to speak of his own in a way that they had not succeeded in doing. It's as though the Buddhist in the West might say (assuming one could say it sincerely): 'Well, I'm the real Christian; I turn the other cheek; I try to love my neighbour as myself. I'm the Christian, not you!'

Kulananda: 'I follow the ideal of the perfect man.'

S: It's sort of stealing the other person's thunder, taking the wind out of his sails. It's a method of approach. I think it's more difficult to use in the West in relation to, say, Christianity, because Christianity is so much more highly developed and organized and exclusive than anything that the Buddha encountered in his day.

Kulananda: And guilt-inducing.

S: And guilt-inducing, yes.

Mike Howes: In the other verses it's been possible to relate from oneself in the West. This verse is really very hard to relate to oneself. In the West it's quite hard: we don't have a tradition of recognizing ...

S: Well, you could paraphrase, you could apply it or connect with it within the context of the FWBO. You could say: 'Don't deceive Order Members with false words,' whether they're Order Members living at home with their wives and families, or whether they're Order Members who've become anagarikas. But whichever their lifestyle may be, well, if they are leading a more spiritual life than you are, be extra careful how you speak to them. Be extra careful about your communication with them. Make sure your communication with them is open and honest and truthful. But I think it's very difficult to relate it to the broader context, the broader social scene, because it is so different from anything the Buddha experienced in his day.

Mike Howes: Would you now go around India, is it appropriate for Buddhists when they're going round India to be very respectful and truthful to Hindu wise men, as it were?

[87]
S: Well, there are Hindu wise men and there are Hindu wise men. There are some who are genuine no doubt, and certainly with them you should be open and honest. But there are

others who are rather different. It's the same among the Buddhist teachers: there are some who are not really teachers but just big ecclesiastics occupying a prominent position in this or that Buddhist sect.

But one can say the important point is that abstention from musavada is a general ethical principle: be truthful, speak the truth to others, be honest in your communication but be particularly careful when you're dealing with people whatever they may be like, whatever they may be called who are spiritually more advanced than yourself. It's even more important in the case of such people that you should be truthful and honest and open. Because if you're not, it's a source of decline for you inasmuch as you're blocking off a source of spiritual inspiration, spiritual nourishment.

Anyway, that's probably clear enough really, isn't it? It's a bit more straightforward than some of the verses we've been dealing with. All right, let's go on to the next one.

Hare: 'When man of wealth and means, of gold and property, enjoys its sweets alone: a source of suffering that.' This is also pretty straightforward. Let's see what Chalmers says: 'Sixth comes the wealthy man, with pelf and gear, who keeps his dainties strictly to himself.' (Laughter) Then Saddhatissa: 'Having ample wealth, assets and property, enjoying them alone this is a cause of one's downfall.'

No-one's completely accurate. 'One who is wealthy' - yes, 'wealthy' will do here - 'who is possessed of gold and possessed of' - it could be 'comforts', it could be 'amenities', even 'luxuries' 'and who enjoys delicacies alone.' This word saduni is 'sweet things'. So, one who enjoys 'delicacies', 'dainties', alone that is to say one who's wealthy, he's possessed with gold, he's got a lot of property perhaps, all sorts of comforts and amenities, and he enjoys his delicacies, especially dainty things, alone, he doesn't share them with others: 'this is a source of decline'.

So what sort of person does this indicate? What sort of state of mind does this indicate? Here you're wealthy, you're possessed of gold - it may be gold bars, bullion - you've got lots of property, possessions. But when you sit down to eat, both literally and metaphorically, you have all sorts of nice things, special things, 'dainties', maybe expensive things, and you eat all by yourself.

Of course in the context of Indian tradition this is considered especially bad, especially selfish, especially unspiritual; not only just unspiritual [but] unethical. One must admit that in the case of the Hindus, not to speak of Buddhist nowadays in India, this is still very much observed. I've mentioned in my memoirs that there are orthodox brahmans in South India who will not eat by themselves. I have experienced this myself. When food is ready and about to be served, if there's no one in the house - that is to say no guests - they will just look out of the door and see if there is anyone passing by that they can call in and offer some food to, so they should not eat alone. Because orthodox Hindu

tradition - and here one might say the best Hindu tradition - is that one of the reasons why you are a householder, why you marry, why you have a family, why you earn money, is so that you can entertain other people. You do not set up a family and acquire wealth just for yourself; you do it, at least partly, so that you can entertain other people.

So to eat alone is a very bad thing to do. A man who eats alone is selfish; not only selfish, he's a thoroughly despicable character, he's not even human, or [he's] barely human. That is the view. That is the attitude. So this makes it worse: he's wealthy, he's got gold, he's got property, all sorts of delicacies are at his command; but he eats them, he enjoys them, alone. What could be worse than this?

Maybe you go to see someone, maybe you're hungry, or at least a bit peckish, and there he is seated with his bottle of wine and maybe a big cake, and he just goes on drinking and eating. He doesn't offer you any. What sort of man is that? Do you see what I mean? What could you tell about someone from that? That he didn't offer to share with you whatever he had? What sort of attitude does this represent? What sort of man is this? How would you describe him? (Laughter)

Kulananda: It's a very gross mental state, isn't it?

Sumitra: It's very grasping.

S: Self-indulgent ... insensitive ...

Prajnananda: Inconsiderate.

S: Inconsiderate. But one could even say that such a man, especially in the Indian setting, must surely know what he is doing. He can't be unaware of what he's doing. He is deliberately flouting certain things: certain conventions perhaps, but also certain principles. So what does that tell you about him? He's almost morally shameless. In the Buddhist sense he's got no hiri or ottappa: no 'shame', no 'conscience', one might paraphrase. We won't go into that now; you can see the seminar on the positive mental events [Seminar on 'Mind in Buddhist Psychology', pp316489; see also Mitrata 19: 'The Eleven Positive Mental Events', August 1978]. He's almost sort of sadistic. He's almost happy to eat and enjoy himself while others are not, while you are not, maybe even while a guest in a house is not. This is really mean, really despicable.

Kulananda: Especially as that consciously actually definitely goes against social convention.

Mike Howes: It's quite hard to relate that sort of image to the West actually. I mean, greed yes.

S: We don't have that strong tradition of hospitality; therefore we're not so sensitive to violations of hospitality. We don't have this ideal of setting-up as a householder in a sense so that you can entertain other people. The stress is, the emphasis is, that it's not for your own selfish [89] indulgence, it's not just for your personal satisfaction; it's for the sake of fulfilling a certain social function.

Kulananda: It's something we really ought to cultivate within the new society. I noticed at Padmaloka when I was up there this weekend they were working out quantities of food for meals. [Because] they'd been concerned over the amount of food they waste they've drawn up a chart of what to cook for how many; and at the bottom of the chart is 'always cook for four or five more people than are present' just in case of unexpected guests.

S: Right, yes. Well, in the same way in Hindu society and certainly Buddhist society, if one knows that mendicants are going to be around one always cooks a little extra, so that one can offer [it to] them as and when they come. One would feel ashamed to just cook enough for oneself, not counting on some guest to arrive or a mendicant monk of some kind or other to pass by.

Or at least you offer in some traditions it's said to animals and birds; at least feed them every day. At the very least, if you can't feed any human being, at least feed an animal; so that whatever you're doing, working and earning and so on, it's not just for you and your immediate family; it's for others too.

In other words, this sort of tradition accepts that, yes, man is selfish to some extent you can't eliminate selfishness completely. He's going to want a wife and family, and he's going to want to support them along with himself. But don't limit it to that, don't confine your support to that: be a bit more open than that. Give some support to others, at least to religious mendicants, to guests, to animals. Broaden your outlook a bit in that way. Be less selfish. You're not being asked to give up everything and become a wandering monk; But at least take a step or two in that direction, at least give up well, not even give up something but give something to those who are beyond the immediate family circle.

I must say myself having been in India so many years I'm quite sensitive to these things. I sometimes feel very conscious that when, say, people come to the community they're not always received in a very hospitable manner. I know you must do it tactfully. Sometimes I've felt [this] at Padmaloka. Sometimes people come to see me and someone is ushered into my study; as he's ushered into the study and is greeting me one of the community says: 'Oh, would you like some tea?' It seems quite inappropriate. Maybe the spirit behind it is all right but that's not quite the time to ask: not as soon as he arrives. You should wait a little bit, let him say hello to me, let him sit down; and come maybe five minutes later and ask: 'Would you like some tea?' Sometimes I hear him being asked as he comes up the stairs, when his mind might be very much on his meeting with me and all that. So even when exercising hospitality one has to use a little tact.

End of Cassette Five, Side One

Cassette Five, Side Two

S: ... customs and ceremonies, they do make one's social life smoother, they do make one's relations with other people in society easier and more comfortable. But I think we have to be quite careful how we treat people who turn up, especially those who turn up unexpectedly; how we treat guests or people who just 'stop by', as the Americans say; who just call on us. Sometimes it's difficult in a community because it's not quite clear who's 'in charge', as it were; but every community member should take some responsibility, not just leave the visitors or the guests to the other community members.

Mike Howes: You've mentioned before the idea of a little gift you take in [when you visit someone]; it sounds a lovely idea. It would take quite something to introduce it. People get quite embarrassed.

S: Women are better at this than men.

Mike Howes: At giving them?

S: Yes. I think I've mentioned before that among the women when someone becomes a Mitra the women Order Members and Mitras make quite a big thing of it. There are lots of little presents for that person and lots of hugs and kisses afterwards and all the rest of it. Well, I'm not suggesting that men indulge in all that sort of stuff: hugs and kisses and all that! But a little present might not be inappropriate for the new mitra. They might be embarrassed by hugs and kisses, especially if they're English!

It expresses something positive and therefore creates positivity in the other person, or helps to create positivity. Some people don't even know how to receive presents gracefully; they feel awkward. Maybe they're not accustomed to it.

Mike Howes: Even if it becomes habitual it's a good habit.

S: Well, yes. It shouldn't become just a habit; it shouldn't become mechanical. There should always be feeling with it.

I think it's also important in a community that you share things with other community members. If you get a sort of tuck-box from home (Laughter) Well, some community members do! Kovida gets tuck-boxes for birthdays and on other occasions, with packets of smarties and all sorts of things from his mother! (Loud laughter) So share them with other members of the community. The same if somebody brings you a bottle of wine perhaps well, un-Buddhistic of course! But anyway never mind. At least neutralize any sort of unskilful element in that by just sharing it around. (Loud Laughter) After all, there won't be very much left for each person so not much harm done! But have that attitude of sharing whatever good thing you get, not just keeping it to yourself like Billy Bunter: having it on your own in your room quietly while everybody else has gone to bed. You see the attitude? These [91] little things are quite important; perhaps they're not such little things. They reflect quite deeply-rooted attitudes.

Kulananda: They reflect mental states very directly.

S: Yes, they do.

Kulananda: I remember on my solitary retreat, after I'd been meditating and got more positive, I just wanted to feed the birds. Quite direct. I had a strong desire to. That sort of thing comes from a positive mental state.

S: I think I've mentioned in a lecture that some people make a vow to give something every day. In India that's quite easy because you can always find a beggar and give a small coin just in passing. But some people do make that sort of vow: that they will give something to somebody every day. They do this as a spiritual practice. They take that sort of vow; and if there aren't human beings you can always give something to a dog or to the birds. (Pause)

Anyway perhaps that's clear enough. Let's go on to the next one. Right, this one in Hare's translation is: 'When man is proud of birth and purse and family, and yet ashamed of kin: a source of suffering that.' And then Chalmers says: 'He seventh comes whom birth or wealth or clan inflates, till he looks down on kith and kin.' And Saddhatissa: 'If a man is conceited

through being born in a high social class or by his position in society and looks down on his kith and kin this is a cause of one's downfall.'

Let's just look at the Pali for a minute: (Pause) addho seems to be something like 'inflation'; jati is 'caste', 'by birth'; dhana is 'wealth'; gotta is 'clan'. (Long Pause) Yes ... the original meaning [of addho] is 'to make firm, therefore hard, rigid, callous, selfish'. You take your stand on your caste or your wealth or your gotta or your descent, your lineage. In other words you are proud on their account, you're sort of 'stiff' on their account; and because of that you look down upon your relations, your kith and kin atimanneti, which I think means you are very conceited in relation to them. Let me just check that. Anna: 'to despise, to slight, to neglect'.

So it means roughly that someone is firm in, or takes his stand on, or is stiff and obdurate and selfish on account of his birth that is to say his caste in Indian terms, or, if you like, his hereditary social position his wealth, and his lineage, his descent. And because of that he slights or neglects or despises his relations. Now how is that possible?

Kulananda: It seems contradictory.

S: It seems contradictory; but I think we can understand it in this way that wealth is perhaps the simplest means of approach. Supposing your family is poor but you have become rich; well, then on that account you might slight or despise your relations. Or, for instance, you may yourself be, say, well-born but you may have distant relations, those who are [92] not in the direct line as you are. You might look down on them - 'poor relations' in the same way with the gotta. So there's come to be a difference between you and those from whom in fact you have sprung. And you look down on them, you despise them, you neglect them. In other words, maybe in more modern parlance, you despise your own roots; you want to disown your own roots. So, that is said to be a source of decline, even spiritually. So why? What is the reasoning behind this?

Kulananda: I can see two reasons. One is the unskilful mental state of despising anyone. The other one is the fact of actually becoming cut-off from your roots. It removes one from a source of power.

S: Yes, a source of genuine power on a certain level anyway. And also it's cutting you off from yourself; because you're saying: 'Well, I don't belong to them; they're not my family.' Do you see what I mean? 'They're not my relations; I've no connection with them.' So you're dissociating yourself in a way from yourself.

We do find this, we certainly find this, I think, in England today in the case of some people who may have let's say for example an ordinary working-class background. They happen to go to university, they get a good job, they start mixing with middle-class people, maybe upper-class people, maybe the aristocracy what's left of it. And they become cut-off from their own roots. When they go home to see the old folks they've nothing in common. They start looking down on their own parents or their own relations, even their own brothers and sisters who haven't been to university or who haven't got such good jobs. Then maybe they marry a woman from an upper-middle-class family who has her own standards and her own ideas, but doesn't want much to do with his family so he gets cut off from them. He sort of disowns them in the end, won't even acknowledge them, won't see them.

So it's well-known; there have been studies on this sort of thing. It's called hypergamy: marriage into a higher social class on the part of a man. It has profound psychological effects. It's the theme of quite a lot of 'fifties and 'sixties literature novels isn't it? The stresses and strains that it produces. I think even in some Victorian novels there are some examples of this sort of thing.

Chris Harper: Mr Kipps.

S: I don't remember Mr Kipps but yes, you're probably right. I was thinking of Great Expectations, where Pip doesn't like to think, when he discovers it, that his wealth has come from the ex-convict Magwich. He thought it was coming from the rich old lady, Miss what's her name? I've forgotten now. He didn't mind thinking that she was helping him secretly but he didn't like to think that the old ex-convict was helping him secretly. He was ashamed of that - and he was ashamed of the old convict when he turned up eventually - though there it wasn't a question of blood relationship ... But yes - there [93] is in Great Expectations a case of this in connection with blood relationship. Pip is ashamed of his old brother-in-law who brought him up and with whom he was very close. When he turns up at his rooms and Pip has to introduce him to his roommate, an upper-class young man with whom he shares, he's quite ashamed of this rustic brother-in-law. He feels completely alienated from him, even though they were so close when Pip was a boy, though Joe was so kind to him. And Pip was quite ashamed of himself for feeling ashamed of his brother-in-law; but he can't help being ashamed of him nonetheless. So there are a number of examples of this sort of thing in literature.

You cut yourself off from your roots; perhaps not completely but you cripple yourself to some extent. You cut yourself off from a part of yourself, from something which is, or at least has been, and probably still is, very important to you as an individual. So this is a source of decline, the Buddha is saying: not to acknowledge your origins, not to remain true to your origins. Not that you shouldn't grow beyond them in a true sense, but certainly that you should not fail to acknowledge them out of reasons of vanity.

Prajnananda: You can't deny your own history.

S: You can't deny your own history.

Sumitra: In some ways it seems as if this is directed more towards those who haven't actually taken up the spiritual life full-time. (S: Yes.) Do you think that's a fair comment on the whole teaching? Or is it directed towards the spiritual community specifically?

S: It seems to be directed more towards 'ordinary', so to speak, people, who even though they are living 'ordinary', so to speak, lives should at least be laying some kind of spiritual foundation, who should be ensuring that they don't decline, despite the fact that they're living as lay men and women. They shouldn't allow themselves to sink below a certain point, below a certain level. They shouldn't decline; and for the householders these are sources of decline: such as are now being mentioned.

I don't know whether there is any parallel or analogue in the case of the person who has gone forth from the home life, has gone forth into homelessness. In his case there wouldn't be much point, because as far as, say, the bhikkhu and the samana are concerned, well, within

the Sangha in the narrower sense you're all equal. Whether your father's a king or whether your father's a beggar it doesn't make any difference; that is well-known and accepted.

Though it may be at a later point, yes, sometimes bhikkhus who had gone forth from palaces were considered more important, perhaps, than bhikkhus who had gone forth from huts. That's certainly the case in some parts of the Buddhist world today. So if any bhikkhu even after having become a bhikkhu, even after having gone forth from the spiritual life, still prided himself on his origins, his secular origins, [94] well, he'd be a very poor bhikkhu. He would not really have gone forth after all. In Thailand, for instance, you sometimes come across little pamphlets written by 'Prince Bhikkhu So-and-so' connected with the Royal Family or 'His Royal Highness' or 'His Serene Highness Prince Bhikkhu So-and-so'! Well, he has imperfectly gone forth; because by very definition within the bhikkhu-sangha all previous social distinctions simply disappear.

Kulananda: Except that, even having gone forth, one does need to retain a contact with one's roots, or at least an awareness of them, so that you retain a sort of psychic integrity.

S: Mmmm ... but perhaps if you've really gone forth, well, perhaps you would have gone beyond all that, in the sense that you've gone beyond the psychological level. One could argue in that way.

Well, there might be a parallel inasmuch as perhaps when you'd gone forth you might have studied with a certain bhikkhu. He might have been your first teacher; and you eventually might learn more than he knew. So you might perhaps be not very willing to acknowledge that relatively ignorant bhikkhu or not very learned bhikkhu was your first teacher. So that might be a sort of parallel or analogy. Do you see what I mean? You'd be ashamed of your origins in that sense. You might prefer to think that you were the disciple of some big famous teacher not just of a humble village monk who'd given you your first lessons in the Dharma. Perhaps it's a sort of parallel.

Kulananda: Perhaps also it is an obstacle to a more complete going forth.

S: Yes. In order to go forth you must know where you are at, and acknowledge and accept where you are at, before you can go forth; because that's what you go forth from In England a lot of people try to conceal their origins or at least dress them up a bit, tart them up a bit, make them out a little bit better than they were. While sometimes because there's such a thing as inverted snobbery they make them out to be worse than they were.

Chris Harper: There seems to be quite a lot of that in the Friends: an awareness of Scottish heritage for example, or of English heritage. There seems to be quite a lot of that.

Dharmananda: I remember when I first went into college I used to get really annoyed when I went home and found that some of my close friends at school had very suddenly adopted a very middle-class accent because they were in college. Most of us used to find it quite funny because they did stick out like sore thumbs. I think by a process of association over a number of years I've lost most of my original accent.

S: Well, I think a lot of people these days do lose their original accent just because they're associating with a [95] different kind of people from the kind of people that they were born

and brought up with. Some of our Scottish Friends, some of our Glaswegian Friends, coming down to London do lose or at least modify or soften their rich Glaswegian accents after a while.

Prajnananda: I think people sometimes find it hard to understand them otherwise. (S: Yes.)

Sumitra: This raises a question to me it's just a little bit off the track in relation to the Friends, in relation to the way in which we operate. Things are setup in a very progressive way: that is, you come to a beginners' class and you progress through that system. There doesn't seem to be a great deal of room or a great deal of emphasis on having a 'laity', if you like; either people progress and go forward or they disappear. I was just wondering if there's anything that you feel about that: if there's any way that we could alter that situation, or if you feel it would be good or otherwise to do so.

S: I don't think we should have a laity in the sense of a body of people who though they call themselves Buddhists, and who in fact in a sense may be Buddhists, are 'standing still' and accept that they're standing still. In fact I would go so far as to question whether you can be genuinely a Buddhist, whether you can really Go for Refuge, and not only stand still but accept that you stand still. Do you see what I mean? So a lay Buddhist should not be one who in his Buddhist life is standing still; a lay Buddhist should be a Buddhist who has or who adopts a particular lifestyle, and who within the context of that lifestyle is 'going forward'. Do you see what I mean?

Sumitra: Yes I do, yes.

S: Whereas in most Buddhist countries it's the bhikkhus who are supposed to go forward in theory anyway. The lay people tend to stand still, so to speak, in their Buddhism. But I think that that is contradictory to the real notion of being a Buddhist. So I think there can't be a distinction between laity and the monks in the sense of a distinction between those who stand still and those who go forward or those who progress spiritually.

Sumitra: I'm sorry, I don't actually follow that.

S: Well, if you want to use the terms 'laity' and 'monks' at all, it cannot be validly in a sense of one body of people who say that they are Buddhists, but who make no effort to develop, and another body of people who do make an effort to develop. If you're not making an effort to develop you are not a Buddhist. (Sumitra: Right, right.) So therefore if you are a lay Buddhist you cannot be a lay Buddhist in the sense of a Buddhist who does not make any effort to develop that is a contradiction in terms. Therefore the difference between layman and non-layman - or between layman and monk, let us [96] say for the sake of using those terms - is not a difference between those who are standing still and those who are moving forward, making an effort spiritually; because they're all in principle making an effort, they're all trying to develop. The distinction is purely one of lifestyle: in the one case a lifestyle involving marriage, family, job, and in the other case a lifestyle not involving any of those things. But within the context of their respective lifestyles all make an effort to go forward.

So we don't want a Buddhist laity in the sense of those who, though they call themselves Buddhists, are not making an effort to go forward, not making an effort to develop. Though it may be considered that we ought to have a Buddhist laity in the sense of those who, while

they are definitely making an effort to develop, to grow spiritually, are doing that within the context of the lifestyle of a layman, i.e. someone with wife and children and a regular job. Do you see what I mean?

Sumitra: Yeah. Do you think that's actually possible in any real sense?

S: I think the gravitational pull being such, if you are a layman, if your lifestyle is of that kind, there's probably a greater degree of gravitational pull on you, for perfectly obvious reasons. That is not to say that merely by 'going forth' formally, simply by not having a wife, child and regular job, that you are no longer subject to that gravitational pull; but I think, some other factors being equal, you are less subject to it. I think one can say that.

I also reminded some people recently that when I said originally that 'the Going for Refuge is primary and lifestyle is secondary', I did not mean that lifestyle is unimportant or irrelevant; I only said it was secondary. I didn't say that any old lifestyle would do.

Kulananda: It's only secondary inasmuch as it's secondary to the going forth.

S: Right, yes. Otherwise your lifestyle could be that of a thief, a swindler, and so on but that's not good enough.

Prajnananda: Your going forth influences your lifestyle.

S: Yes, of course it must. The lifestyle cannot be a truly neutral sort of thing. But in the case of different people it'll influence it to a different degree or in different ways. You might have given up, say, wife and children, but not given up, say, the bottle. You might have given up the one but not the other. So most people, a lot of people, they tend to attach more importance to what they've given up or what they've gone forth from and less importance to what you've given up and what you've gone forth from. So we have to be careful of that.

Mike Howes: You talk of a gravitational pull; is there another pull? - that people who are genuinely trying to [97] develop through meditation, whatever their lifestyles, will actually be pulled towards a ...

S: Well, one could speak in those terms; I have spoken in those terms. But I think, other factors being equal, some lifestyles do allow you to open yourself to that pull of the Unconditioned, as I've called it, more easily than others.

Chris Harper: Usually those that you may call lay Buddhists become perhaps committed to Buddhism after they're in that position of responsibility i.e. they've got the wife and kids and the house. How do you feel about those who take on that kind of responsibility after they've Gone for Refuge, perhaps have become 'lay' Buddhists from the other .. ?

S: Well, I think you could only validly do this as a sort of public duty, not to say social duty. I think the only valid reason would be that you genuinely wanted to have children, that's to say children that you would bring up in an ideal environment. I think that could be the only valid reason for someone who really had Gone for Refuge, the only valid reason for them to take up that particular lifestyle. Do you see what I mean? (Chris Harper: Yeah.)

To take it up because you'd fallen in love would I think be incompatible with your Going for Refuge. But if on reflection you decided: 'Well, this is what I really want to do; I really would like to bring up children in a positive way, children of my own, children I could help step by step to grow up into individuals.' Well, you could, if you were honest and genuine and not rationalizing, really take this upon yourself as your Buddhist work and look around for a suitable partner with whom to do this.

This would be, I think, quite valid; though the idea might be strange to people in this country today. But it certainly fits in with the Indian tradition. Do you see what I mean?

I have even gone so far as to say in the past that it is perhaps the more spiritually developed person who ought to get married, not the spiritually undeveloped. Because I think the spiritually undeveloped can't really handle it; they're perhaps not fit to be bringing up children. Do you see the logic of that? It's not that any sort of young man and young woman, thrown together by chance, falling in love with each other, hastily setting up home together, without knowing themselves, without knowing each other, could be the most successful marriage partners or parents. It seems awful that people go into it with so little preparation. At least in India people are prepared for marriage and parenthood, prepared morally and psychologically. In this country they're not.

Dharmananda: Prepared by virtue of the way that they grew up?

S: Yes, and prepared by the system and the tradition to which they belong; by their parents and other relations. We enter upon these things grossly unprepared.

[98]
Chris Harper: That's interesting, because I know some people who see their spiritual development in terms of bringing up a family. They actually see that as the way in which they'd like to grow.

S: I think that is a quite valid ideal provided it is a genuine aspiration and not the rationalization of, say, an infatuation.

Kulananda: - and a desire for security.

S: - or a desire for security.

Kulananda: But something that occurs to me is that somebody in that position is taking a very large risk; because you don't know what nature's going to throw up at you in terms of children. You don't know what sort of material there's going to be. Whereas if you stay loose, young men who might gravitate around you well, you know they want to find a spiritual life. So if you have time to give to them, it might be much more valuably spent.

S: Well, yes, you could argue along those lines.

Sumitra: I find it very difficult to see how you could ever really justify getting married in terms of the limitations it would place on you and the possibilities of how you could use your time and energy.

S: I think a lot would depend upon the social system of which you are a part. For instance, I see that our Indian Order Members manage to do quite a lot in some cases more than some of our unattached Order Members here manage to do! But that's because the social system supports that. They belong perhaps to an extended family. When they're away, maybe for weeks on end, working for the Movement, their wife and children are not left alone, they're left with a whole lot of other people. And the wife is taught or trained by tradition to accept implicitly whatever the husband does, to support him in what he does; not to compete with him, not to undermine him; to back him up in whatever he wants to do. That's the training that they get. That's the Indian ideal, the ideal of the wife.

I think it's something we can't imagine here. Well, maybe, yes, no doubt there are some loyal wives in England, in Western society, who do fully back up what their husbands do. But in India it's much more general; it's a sort of universal ideal. They just quietly give their husbands their full support in what he's trying to do. Not that they're always trying to dish out advice as to how he should do it no but just to make it easier, to help create the sort of background from which he can operate, create a sort of soothing and pleasant influence, a soothing and pleasant atmosphere, in which he can rest if he needs to rest; not to bother him when he's thinking about things; to remain in the background until one is needed.

[99]
This requires a degree of self-effacement of the sort that some women would consider a vice rather than a virtue. You know what the Jill Tweedies and the Jilly Coopers of the world would think of it! The Buddhist view, or the Indian view, the Hindu view also is very different. I would say it works better and conduces more to the happiness and well-being of those concerned.

So if even in England someone did say in all sincerity that they wanted to start a family with the idea of just providing whatever children came along with a positive environment in which to grow up, I can't say that I'd necessarily be against that. I couldn't say that it wasn't a valid ideal if the persons concerned genuinely wanted to follow that.

On the other hand one could also say, well, there are children to be adopted, there are children without parents; perhaps you might feel called upon to adopt a child. Unfortunately, I think, in law you're not allowed to adopt children if you're not a married couple. I think, as far as I know, single people are not permitted to adopt children. I'm sure a community would not be permitted to adopt a child though that would probably be the best place for a boy to grow up, the best place of all. They don't object to keeping him in an orphanage, but they probably wouldn't allow him to be adopted by a community that would look after him as their own. Well, maybe one can't altogether blame them, because communities like our's are pretty rare and in any case they're recent phenomena.

Chris Harper: Probably quite misunderstood as well.

S: But perhaps find us a sympathetic local Council, you might even try to persuade them to allow you to adopt a child. Especially if he wasn't too young, or maybe if he was getting a bit difficult to handle, they might well want you to adopt him or at least look after him.

Kulananda: The sort of thing we could do in due course is to set up foster homes. (S: Right) It would be very good to bring up kids without all the inconvenience of marriage.

S: Instead of having marriage without the inconvenience of kids. (Laughter) It seems to me that there's no reason to get married if you're not going to have children. It would seem to be just selfishness and insecurity.

Kulananda: In some ways actually to have children nowadays is selfishness as well: there's populous enough [?].

S: Yes, that's true. This is one of the things that I thought when reading about this great hero in Poland, Lech Walescha. Well, he's got seven children now so what sort of social conscience has he got? Well, of course he's a Catholic. His social conscience seems to operate only within a certain restricted and defined area. [.. unclear ..] ... my newspaper didn't mention it, neither of my Sunday newspapers [100] mentioned it; The Freethinker didn't mention it and they're usually on to things like that. Anyway, shall we have just one more verse? and then we really will be getting on with things.

Mike Howes: Perhaps tomorrow you could give us a translation of verse seven?

S: Yes. Let's come on to just one more question. If we do this one now there'll be four more to do tomorrow. This is the fifth one, so we're getting on quite well now. We'll certainly cover the whole thing. It's quite a neat little sutta, isn't it?

Sumitra: Yes it is; good for men beginners.

S: Mmmm, you must try it out on them.

End of Cassette Five, Side Two

Cassette Six, Side One

S: ... Anyway, here's another verse. Hare says: 'When man on woman dotes, on drink and dice alike, and all his savings wastes: a source of suffering that'. And then Chalmers: 'The eighth's the rake who squanders all he gets fast as it comes, on woman, drink and dice'. It's quite good from a literary point of view although not strictly literal. And how did Saddhatissa manage that? He's a bit more pedestrian. He says: 'To be a playboy, a drunkard, a gambler, and to squander all one earns this is a cause of one's downfall.' That's a bit tame.

But actually it goes something like this: Itthidhutto suradhutto akkhadhutto ca yo naro laddham laddham vinaseti, which means: 'one who abandons himself' - or 'is abandoned' - 'to women' - or 'woman' - 'to drink and to gambling; and who destroys whatever gains he makes'. That's the literal translation: 'one who ruins himself with women, drink and gambling; and who wastes whatever he gains'.

Kulananda: Is that necessarily in a material sense?

S: It doesn't say. Laddha is whatever you gain. It seems to be material rather than spiritual, but you could read it as meaning spiritual gains too. Certainly your material gains will be wasted if you abandon yourself to women, drink and gambling; wine, women and dice instead of 'wine, women and song'. It's just so obvious that it requires very little comment. Is there any comment that can be made?

It's 'abandoning' that seems to be the key word. It's not necessarily a certain amount of experience of, but it's abandoning yourself to, throwing yourself away on, them, allowing them to ruin, to waste, your life, to become addicted to them so that they are the main things in your life.

[101]
Chris Harper: The word implies quite a lot of unmindfulness, doesn't it? A lack of awareness.

S: Yes. But what sort of a man would get into that sort of state? How would one get into that sort of state? Abandoning yourself to women, drink and gambling like some old-fashioned aristocrat, like Byron did or tried to do at one stage of his career. 'Wasting your substance', throwing away all your gains in that way; what drives a man to this? Do you yourself know people who have done this? Or have you been through this sort of phase yourself? If so, how did it happen? Please tell us; throw some light on this text.

Kulananda: There's a large element of self-destructiveness.

S: Self-destructiveness perhaps; because you abandon yourself to women well, there are all sorts of consequences: physical debility. You abandon yourself to wine: drunkenness, intoxication, alcoholism. You abandon yourself to gambling: you stake everything on the turn of a card. Well, what sort of mental state is that the result of? You just waste whatever you may gain: money, material goods, anything.

Kulananda: And energy.

S: Energy too.

Kulananda: It's a kind of nihilism. (S: Mmm, yes.) I guess it comes from a lack of faith.

S: As though you feel there's nothing better to do like some members of the old Russian aristocracy apparently. Tolstoy seems to have spent a lot of his time in this sort of way in his younger days.

Sumitra: One feels in a sense, though, that that is the kind of condition that could be more easily turned around than a number of the other ones.

S: Well, Tolstoy turned around, didn't he? Rochester turned around; he was converted practically on his death bed by the good bishop Burnett. Donne turned around or turned himself around didn't he? From being dashing young Jack Donne to Dean Donne, Dean of St Paul's; not writing love poems any more, but holy sonnets, and preaching sermons.

Kulananda: Quite a few Order Members have turned themselves around. (Laughter)

S: Well, maybe not from this sort of extreme; maybe they weren't into this sort of extreme as much as the man guilty of decline appears to be here. But certainly some Order Members have had their share of women, drugs, and well, gambling doesn't seem to have been all that popular. There are various other vices: things like alcoholism, drug-taking, blue movies, all that kind of thing. Whatever is really degrading: even [102] though it presents itself, at least to begin with, under the guise of enjoyment or excitement or distraction.

Chris Harper: All of these things are quite stimulating; there's a lot of stimulation.

S: Well, yes: women are stimulating, drink is stimulating it releases inhibitions gambling is very exciting.

Chris Harper: It changes the state of your consciousness, doesn't it, while you're indulging in these things?

S: Yes, maybe this is why the aristocracy used to go in for these; they were bored, dull. They didn't have to earn their own living, they had no duties, no responsibilities, plenty of money to hand so they used to spend it on these exciting, stimulating things, but which in the long run were very exhausting and the returns from which constantly, continually, diminished.

Mike Howes: A thought comes to mind: the word 'abandon' is very, very strong like 'Going for Refuge' is very, very strong. I wonder if this abandonment is to some extent an expression of something potentially very positive. Is this abandonment to negative things in any way a wholeheartedness, a need to 'take refuge' in something?

S: But is it a wholeheartedness? Or is it allowing yourself to be sucked in?

Prajnananda: It's trying to lose yourself instead of trying to find yourself.

S: Mmm, yes. Of course, there is this old belief I don't know how justified that it's the real sinner that makes the real saint, not the lukewarm person.

Sumitra: I don't know. I do get the definite feeling though that, say, verse seven seems to imply a degree of brittleness and coldness, whereas this does seem to be whilst it's unskilful, there's a degree of life there that you can work with.

S: I'm not so sure about that. It seems to me like pure escapism. I don't get any feeling of real life here, rather a soul-less, almost pseudo, enjoyment, mechanical and artificial, with no real zest in it at all. That's the impression I get.

Prajnananda: It's passive.

S: It's worse than passive; it's actively passive, you could say. (Laughter)

Sumitra: But it's just this point, it seems to me, that you can come back from and get on to a spiritual track, and in [103] quite a few of the other verses it seems like it's a lot more difficult to make a transition.

S: It's quite difficult to say though. Suppose you're an alcoholic, supposing you become an alcoholic; is it all that easy to get back?

Chris Harper: Perhaps Sumitra is drawing attention to those well, you mentioned a few earlier yourself who suddenly do have this about-turn, as it were. For instance, there seem to be a lot of people in the Order who had a lot of drug experiences and so on, who perhaps wouldn't be involved with the Order if they didn't have that kind of preliminary experience. I don't know ...

S: I just mentioned drug experience, but perhaps drug experience, inasmuch as it's to some extent 'psychedelic', is in a somewhat different category. It is, at least sometimes, a bit mind-expanding in a way that women and alcohol and gambling are not, I think, mind-expanding.

Chris Harper: It's still sense-oriented really, isn't it?

Kulananda: Perhaps you're thinking of the fact that somebody involved in these might be getting away from convention and therefore more open to experience.

Sumitra: Well, yes, there is that, that did just come to me then: that there is a desire for experience which say somebody who was very slothful, very lazy, and couldn't even be bothered to go out ...

Prajnananda: ... and get drunk! (Laughter)

Sumitra: Well, say, to go out gambling maybe; that they were so inert, they wouldn't even do that. I don't know; perhaps I'm barking up the wrong tree. (Laughter) The only reason I mentioned it was because of this point about whether the verses were strictly progressive or whether they should be treated as entities on their own.

S: They don't seem to be progressive downward if I can use that expression in a strictly step-by-step manner, in a sense that each succeeding verse is one step lower than preceding one. It doesn't really seem to be like that. Maybe the decline is multi-dimensional.

Prajnananda: They've gone from some fairly general things, general principles, to more quite specific ones, haven't they?

S: Yes, yes.

Chris Harper: I was going to say that presumably you can't take it so literally in a step-by-step manner because in order to suffer downfall you don't have to go through each of these different states successively.

[104]
S: Yes, well, in the sense that it's multidimensional you could go through quite a number of them at the same time.

Chris Harper: Or just any one of them is sufficient for downfall, perhaps.

S: Yes, even for complete downfall.

Mike Howes: Is the Mangala Sutta progressively more upwards?

S: Yes, quite definitely. Also one can say that as one progresses one becomes more integrated, therefore as you progress there's more of a tendency to come to a peak; but the more you decline, the more you regress, or the more you involve, the more dispersed you become. Do you see what I mean?

Prajnananda: Less integrated.

S: So, the more you decline, .. you don't come together in a decline. You become more and more fragmented, more and more dispersed, more and more dissipated. That's an interesting word, isn't it? 'Dissipated.'

Prajnananda: There's an idea that one sometimes comes across, that one can sort of exhaust the passions by indulging in them.

Kulananda: You just exhaust yourself by indulging in them!

S: I think this is a prime micchaditthi. If you have a certain normal healthy appetite, like, say, hunger, and there's no neurotic element well, by eating you just satisfy that until you're hungry again. But I think passions aren't like that. They grow with feeding. As the Indian comparison says, it's just like fire blazing up when you throw ghee on it. You don't put out the fire with the ghee; it blazes up all the more.

Sumitra: What about? there's a quotation from Blake in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell one of the proverbs ...

S: 'The path of excess is the way to the palace of wisdom.' Yes, but what does he mean by 'excess'? I don't think he means excess in the moral sense. I think he means a sort of artistic exuberance, an overflowingness. You don't find your way to the palace of wisdom by curbing yourself, by restraining and restricting yourself. I think he uses the word 'excess' in a highly positive sense here. I don't think he means that wine, women and song are the way to the palace of wisdom. I don't think he means it in this sense.

Mike Howes: Have you not said in some context which I can't remember something like: 'If you're going to overeat, then overeat properly!'? (Laughter)

[105]
S: No, I never said that! I wonder who did say it. I hope it hasn't been attributed to me!

Kulananda: I think you might once have said that: 'If you're going to sin then at least enjoy yourself!' (Laughter)

S: No, Kipling said that! 'Here's a sin I'll sin it and here's the price of sinning and I'll pay.' It's in his famous poem If - I think it's in If - anyway, it's Kipling.

I think what Blake was getting at was that the way to wisdom wasn't a sort of careful and cautious prudence. It was a sort of letting yourself go and not being afraid of full excess, not being afraid of exuberance, not being afraid of life and vitality.

Prajnananda: There's that other one: 'Sooner kill a baby in its cradle than nurse unacted desire', which is getting at the same thing really.

S: I'm sure he didn't mean indulge in or give expression to every unskilful mental state, as we would call it. Don't forget the word 'desire' was for him a very positive word.

Kulananda: Akin to virya.

S: Well, not just virya, but also 'passion' in the positive sense: intense, outward-going positive emotion. He meant by that little proverb that wisdom is not something sort of cold and calculating. (Pause) I think that what the Buddha is saying in this verse is that dissipation in the strict sense as represented by such things as womanizing, alcoholism and addiction to gambling are a source of decline; abandoning oneself, throwing oneself away on these essentially negative pursuits; just giving up, just letting the conditions pull you in, draw you in, suck you in, in its most extreme form, its most negative form, through, perhaps, your craving for excitement and stimulation.

Oh yes, and one point I was going to make: you said something a little while back about going in search of experience, looking for experience or wanting experience. You said something like that. Anyway, what I was going to say at the time was: I think if you think in those terms you're already on the wrong path because one has experience. If you want to go in search of experience it means you're alienated from what you are at the present experiencing. I mean, if you go after women for the sake of an experience or you start drinking for the sake of experience, to experience yourself more vividly, or you take up gambling as an experience well, it means that you're not in touch with yourself, with your feelings, your emotions. You're alienated from yourself, you are not experiencing your experience, because you are never devoid of experience.

Kulananda: That's the source of contentment: your own experience.

[106]
S: So I think abandoning yourself to women and so on represents a desperate attempt to experience yourself when you do not experience yourself by a means which will not in fact enable you to experience yourself any more; so you try something more extreme, more pseudo-stimulating, but you still aren't able to experience yourself. I think this is what this verse is really getting at.

Kulananda: But at the same time you do have an exciting experience and so you continue along those lines.

S: But it's very temporary though. So you have to take more and more as in the case of gambling where you have to stake more and more until you are ruined. In the beginning it's quite exciting to stake a fiver; in the end a fiver's nothing, it must be a hundred pounds, a thousand pounds you only get the excitement then, you just feel yourself for a little bit, you experience something for a minute but then it's gone, because essentially you're not in touch with yourself.

Chris Harper: Do you think that's something to do with - albeit temporarily - being a kind of hero in a pseudo-sense. For a split second, or a few minutes perhaps, you're gambling away your entire property. You do something really desperate.

S: A heroic gesture, a grand gesture; you're striking an attitude.

Mike Howes: What you were saying then I wish I fully understood, or even began to understand, because I am aware that in my life even still I look for experience, I look at gaps

and look for experience to fill the gaps.

S: I think one should start by trying to experience the gaps. For instance, take the case of a weekend, Saturday and Sunday: things are a bit dull, you feel a bit dull. You don't sort of sit down quietly and allow yourself to experience the dullness and get in contact with yourself and then do something. You start at once trying to fill in the gap. You start looking at Time Out: 'Well, what's on? What can I go and see?' You don't particularly want to see anything; you look for something that you could go and see, even though you don't particularly want to see anything. Anything to fill up that gap, anything to give you some experience of yourself.

But that isn't what you should do. If you start feeling dull and bored and empty and listless you should just sit and experience that, get in touch with that and then gradually you will feel all right, and from that experience of yourself then you can go and do something which perhaps you actually want to do, genuinely want to do. You do it because you want to do it; you don't do it in order to fill the gap that is made by your not wanting particularly to do anything because you don't experience yourself particularly.

Chris Harper: So, once you've given yourself a bit of space, you get in contact with how you really feel, and on that basis [107] you can do something more positive, rather than just trying to find an experience which will provoke you into feeling something.

S: You must re-establish the contact with yourself which you've lost if you start just looking for distractions. So this verse seems to envisage someone who's really estranged from himself, really alienated, doesn't experience himself; who's got to go in search of stimulation through sex, through drink, through gambling, so he may just momentarily experience himself through those things. But it doesn't work for very long, so he's got to take a stronger dose. That works for a little while, but then he's got to take a stronger dose still. In that way he just becomes addicted; he ruins himself. That's a source of decline; he becomes progressively more and more alienated from himself. Instead of experiencing himself more, he experiences himself less and less perhaps.

Sumitra: What would you say about someone like, say, a racing driver? Because there's somebody who's very definitely involved in something that gives you a very strong, very acute, experience of that kind or nature but it hasn't got the same progressive downward trip to it.

S: No, because it's instantaneous; that is to say, when you are killed. Here the stimulus is the risk of death. You're playing with death; that makes you feel more alive, you experience yourself more because you are aware of the possibility of death at almost any minute. This is an even more extreme form because in the case of wine, women and song you don't destroy yourself immediately; it usually takes a little time. You see? But in the case of the racing driver it could be immediately, it could be instantly.

Sumitra: So would it be fair, do you think, to describe that as actually quite an unskilful form of activity?

S: Oh yes indeed. I think it's self-destructive.

Sumitra: So the mental state from which you do it is almost bound to be a negative one?

S: I would say you must be alienated, you must not experience yourself. You want to sort of jerk yourself into an experience of yourself by simply playing with death, by means of the proximity of death; that makes you feel the fact that you are alive, because you could die, you could kill yourself, any minute. That gives you a sort of exhilaration. I think this is why people go in for that sort of activity.

Prajnananda: Do you think the same thing would apply completely to something like mountaineering or rock-climbing?

S: Oh yes. I'm sure in some cases.

[108]
Kulananda: Dharmavira said that's why he stopped mountain climbing.

Prajnananda: It became addictive.

S: You play with death and you thereby have a heightened sense of life, of your own existenced which implies that you don't really experience yourself very much normally. You need to have your experience of yourself heightened in that particularly way to feel yourself at all perhaps. That's why some people come more alive when there's danger, the prospect of death. Even in time of war you may buck-up a bit, you feel more alive because death is a real possibility.

Kulananda: So many men have said that.

Chris Harper: But could not some kind of realization or insight come out of such a thing? When you go beyond it?

S: Sometimes, yes. Human life being such and its resources being infinite, it sometimes can happen. There's that famous verse quoted by Johnson: 'Between the stirrup and the ground, he mercy sought, he mercy found'. A man fell off his horse: he was riding his horse at great speed, galloping away; the horse stumbled, he was thrown. But in that instant between falling off his horse and touching the ground, he repented of his evil life and was saved just in that instant. A bit Zen-like in a way within that particular theological context.

Chris Harper: There's the story of the man who's holding on to the side of the cliff and as he actually fell he grasped a strawberry which tasted ever so sweet!

S: Well, that's the opposite thing, isn't it?

Chris Harper: Is it?

S: He's not finding mercy, he's finding damnation there. (Puzzled laughter) Where he should be having a transcendental experience he's just clinging on to something mundane.

Kulananda: Eating strawberries!

Chris Harper: But it's a Zen story!

S: No, I think you've grasped it in a slightly - I won't say wrong way - but an unusual way. (Laughter) I think you've given the story a different point - though not different from the one I was making. Mine was that, in the midst of even the destructive situation, you can grasp something which is beyond all that. But in your case, in the midst of the potentially positive situation, you grasp at something destructive.

Chris Harper: Well, the way I was looking at it was from the point of view of his consciousness being that much sharper and his level of appreciation being that much higher.

[109]
S: No, I don't think in the original story, the Zen story, it's a question of appreciation but of greed that even in that sort of crucial situation your greed is operating so powerfully that you can ignore the situation in which you actually are and indulge your greed. And sometimes people do that.

Sumitra: Well, well, well ... Just to come back to this contrast, because in something like gambling, something like being involved to an indulgent extent with women, drinking to excess, those things are socially acknowledged as being unskilful activities ...

S: I thought you were going to say: ' .. the activities of a gentleman'! (Laughter) It used to be regarded as gentlemanly activity, certainly aristocratic. I was reading about life at Oxford and Cambridge a hundred and fifty years ago: a young nobleman was expected to behave like this! It was almost his duty to! It was only the rising evangelical middle-class society which tended to regard these sort of things as unskilful and even to try to bring young lords to order - which they originally resisted. But, yes, usually these things are regarded as unskilful and certainly they are unskilful.

Sumitra: And yet something which in some senses seems almost more extreme on examination - like being a racing driver - is generally acknowledged as being quite a heroic sort of activity.

S: And rewarded. I think people always have a sort of sneaking respect for those who risk their lives in any way. It seems heroic even though it's pseudo-heroic. I think it's that that people respect, even though perhaps it has taken quite a negative and unskilful form. You're not risking your life for any ideal, you're risking it for the sake of risking it, for the sake of excitement and stimulus.

Sumitra: How would you define a true hero? What would you define as a truly heroic act?

S: Oh dear ... Well, that's getting off on a completely different tack. Let's define it in a Blake proverb. I think he says something like: 'Placing another before oneself is a sublime act'. So one might say that sort of sublime act is the essence of true heroism: you place another before yourself, whether it's giving someone the last seat in the lifeboat when the ship is sinking, or anything else of that sort. When you genuinely - I won't say sacrifice - but you give your life for the sake of another person, I think that is probably the essentially heroic act.

Other heroic acts are approximations to that, and maybe are more or less heroic according to the reason for which, or the motive with which, you give your life for somebody else. You may give your life for somebody else because you're very fond of them, because maybe it's

your own son or your own [110] father or your own wife. Or you may give your life for them out of a sense of duty; you may be serving them and have a strong sense of loyalty. Or you may give your life for their's because you might think they've a better chance than you have in this life for reaching Enlightenment. So these are all heroic actions in varying degrees. In each case you place another person, another person's interests, another person's life, before your own. And, as Blake said, that is a sublime act; and a sublime act is a heroic act.

So that's a long way from eating or enjoying dainties alone, because that's completely unsublime, unheroic. It's degraded and mean; one doesn't even like to think about it.

Anyway, perhaps we should come to a stop there, having traversed those five verses pretty rapidly this evening, but I think quite adequately nonetheless. I think we've gone into all these verses so far quite well, though perhaps not too well. We haven't exhausted them and no doubt there are quite a lot of things that other people might like to say by way of comment. Anyway, perhaps that's enough for the time being. With luck we finish off tomorrow.

End of Cassette Six, Side One

Cassette Six, Side Two

No recording seminar resumes on Cassette Seven, Side One

[111]
Cassette Seven, Side One

SESSION FOUR

S: All right, let's start off with Hare. This verse is quite simple and straightforward as regards the translation. 'Who, not content with his, is seen with others' wives, is seen with harlots too: a source of suffering that.' And then Chalmers: 'Ninth comes the lecher who, not satisfied with his own wives, is seen about with whores, or caught in dalliance with others' wives.' That's a bit of a paraphrase. And then Saddhatissa says: 'Not to be contented with one's wife but to be seen with a mistress or the wives of others this is a cause of one's downfall'. This is nearer to a literal translation.

Actually it says: Sehi darehi asantuttho 'with his own wife not satisfied' vesiyasu padissati 'he's seen among vesiya' I suppose 'courtesans' might be better than 'prostitutes' dissati paradaresu 'he is seen among or with the wives of others' 'this is a source of decline'. So: 'Not being satisfied with one's own wife, and on that account being seen with or among courtesans or even with the wives of others: this is a source of downfall'.

So, in what way is that? Is it obvious? Or is there perhaps a factor which is not obvious? (Pause) What is it that actually constitutes the downfall here? Leaving aside perhaps purely legalistic considerations [about] relating to the wives of others and so on. What sort of person, what type of person, is being referred to here? (Pause) What's the keyword?

Prajnananda: Satisfied: not satisfied.

S: Yes, not satisfied.

Prajnananda: Not being contented.

S: Not being contented. Of course, there is an assumption here, which some people might question: the assumption being that one should be satisfied, one should be content, with one's own wife. Clearly this is the situation of a layman, a householder, a married man, which is being referred to here.

So what exactly is meant, does one think, by being content with one's own wife? To what extent is that positive? To what extent is it a negative thing if one is not content with one's own wife? (Pause) I mean, the verse seems to imply that one should be content in the case of a married man with one's own wife.

Sumitra: Yes, it does seem very self-explanatory really, because if you're going to start going around with somebody else's wife then you are affecting two or three other people: your own wife, his wife, and whoever she is married to. So the generation of unskilfulness reciprocates.

S: Yes. Usually the third precept - that is to say abstaining from kamesu micchachara - is explained as primarily abstaining from adultery, that is abstaining from associating with the wives of others. All right, one might [112] say: Well, why is that important? Why is it considered skilful to abstain from that kind of conduct? What makes it so unskilful?

Mike Howes: If I remember a tape of yours I heard, there seem to be two reasons ...

S: Oh yes, I'm not saying there are not others, but I mean this is the first. This is the most serious breach of this particular precept that you commit adultery.

Mike Howes: There are two reasons for not committing adultery. One is that by committing adultery you are doing violence, I believe you said from the tape; also you are not practising calm within yourself.

S: Well, you're not exactly practising violence. Maybe you've mixed it up with something else which was [that], in addition to adultery, rape and abduction are mentioned, and here of course the question of violence does come in. But supposing you commit adultery; supposing you, as a man, seduced the wife of another man? Of course, bear in mind the Indian context where usually the man is more responsible for taking the initiative. Well, you've been responsible for bringing about a breach between that woman whom you seduce and her husband. So that is regarded as an unskilful action; you've disturbed their matrimonial content, as it were; you've broken up their relationship. In other words, you haven't really regarded the consequences of your action, you haven't considered what might be the effects of your action on those other people. There might be a whole string of consequences.

Chris Harper: Also you may be actively encouraging discontentment within her own mind or perhaps even dishonesty.

S: Yes, dishonesty might very well be in question, because she would probably conceal what had happened from her husband. But suppose someone was to take the modern point of view, let's say, the modern 'liberated' point of view: Well, why should married partners be so

exclusively devoted to each other? Why should it not be possible to have extra-matrimonial affairs, etc, etc. What's wrong with it? Supposing someone was to argue in that way? What would be one's reply to that?

Kulananda: Doesn't work. It's not as simple as that.

S: In what way?

Kulananda: People tend to become emotionally involved and attached. Something deeply instinctual gets provoked. It seems to be almost impossible to get around actually. (S: Yes.) Women especially have a propensity for forming attachments; and it can get very complex.

S: So, even leaving aside perhaps the ethical aspect, is it psychologically undesirable to get involved deeply in that [113] sort of way with another person who is already involved to some extent with some third party? That can make life very complicated, yes? (General Agreement)

For instance, to give a concrete example, supposing a woman is married but supposing she doesn't get on well with her husband; well, she leaves him; she is again a single woman, so to speak. Well, if you were then to develop a relationship with her, she being free, let's say, both legally and psychologically from the previous relationship, well, that would not constitute adultery, even supposing, for the sake of argument, she was still technically legally married to that other person. Do you see what I mean? I think legality doesn't really come in here very much. But on the one hand, it would be unskilful actually to break up an existing relationship well, maybe I shouldn't say break up, but sort of intervene in it, because you don't in fact break it up so easily, but you enter into it, you complicate it ...

Kulananda: You stir it up.

S: You stir it up. You introduce a divisive element, that is to say: yourself. You sort of irrupt into that relationship between those two people. So that cannot be good for them; that cannot be good for you.

Supposing you were both already married, well, the fact that you could consider that at all means that you weren't fully satisfied or content with your existing marriage partner, but you hadn't really faced up to the situation. You may be perhaps not content for good reason, but then you should clear that up, straighten that out, perhaps detach yourself or dissociate yourself from that relationship, before getting involved with anybody else. And even if you do get involved with somebody else, make sure that they are as free, so to speak, as you are. Do you see what I mean? That would be almost common sense. So it's not that adultery is morally wrong; it's as though it suggests that there is great psychological confusion. If two people are technically still married but they've agreed each is going to go their own way, and neither really minds the other going their own way, as distinct from just saying so well then, the question of adultery can't really, psychologically speaking or ethically speaking, arise.

Kulananda: What happens nowadays very often is that people enter into relationships which are theoretically open-ended, which are going to allow for all these dalliances, but which in the end, end up like a ball of string. People misunderstand their own propensity for forming attachments.

S: I heard of a wonderful expression which apparently is being used currently in America in encounter group circles: it's 'an open-ended commitment'! (Laughter) Well, if you use expressions like that, the result can only be confusion. But this also raises the question - if anyone does want to discuss it - of marriage itself. Someone quoted Kant quite disapprovingly - I think it was a feminist writer - that he [114] had defined marriage as 'a mutual agreement for the exclusive and reciprocal use of each others' sex organs'! (Loud Laughter) He being an old bachelor! But according to him that is what it amounts to. But there is normally in marriage this sort of understanding: that you will limit your sexual attentions to your marriage partner. This is usually considered the basis of marriage. And it's only when this is considered the basis of marriage, or at least as an essential part of it, that the question of adultery can really arise. So one can only question the notion of adultery by questioning the notion of marriage.

So what does one feel about marriage, so-defined? Does that really constitute marriage? That sort of mutual sexual fidelity? And to what extent is that sort of mutual sexual fidelity, whether sanctified by religion or legalized by society, is that healthy in itself, is it skilful?

Sumitra: There are two things that occur to me. In your assessment of when a marriage has actually [ended] although people are legally married they're not actually married emotionally or physically involved with each other. That would seem to suggest to me that you should be paying the same attention to people who are in a permanent relationship that isn't legally defined.

S: Yes, I think from an ethical point of view you can't really say: 'Well, it didn't matter if I did have an affair with her; she wasn't legally married to that bloke.' No, if the tie is there, well, I think it constitutes marriage from the psychological point of view. (General Agreement)

Sumitra: And also I think it's impossible to divorce a sexual relationship from an emotional one of whatever kind. It has to be there. You can't relate to another human being in that way on an entirely animal level. I don't think it's possible.

Kulananda: Attachment between men and women springs up very, very quickly. I think people always tend to underestimate it.

S: So perhaps the question really is: What degree of attachment or even what degree of relationship does there have to be between two people, usually two people of the opposite sex, for you to have to consider that you should not get involved as a third party, inasmuch as that would then constitute an adulterous irruption into their relationship? You see what I mean? Usually, the warning signal that you are given is that these people are legally married. But if people don't now attach importance to legal marriage, that signal is not there. So how does one assess, how is one to know, whether that degree of attachment exists: that a degree of attachment exists such that it would be unwise or unskilful for you to form an attachment with one of those people?

Prajnananda: Well, even if people aren't legally married, they have that sort of relationship, which is usually recognized in their social circle.

[115]
Kulananda: Well, there are a lot of borderline cases ...

Prajnananda: There are, yes.

S: Because, for instance, the woman may be quite willing, despite her relationship with another man, to have a little affair with you. All right, what then should be your attitude? You might find it very difficult to decide. But, very likely, extreme caution is indicated especially if you already have a friendly positive relationship with the man in question; maybe he's a friend of yours. I remember some years ago, back in the Pundarika days, there was a very, very bitter quarrel, one could say, between two Order Members because one of them well, so far as the other was concerned 'stole his woman'. The woman, whom I also knew, who was a very pleasant, very young girl indeed, in my view would have been quite happy to have kept them both going. She didn't really bother; she was an amoral little creature. But they contested possession and it led to serious ill-feeling between them for two or three years - because, assuming the first one was over-attached, the second one didn't take that fact sufficiently into consideration.

So if one does enter into a relationship of this sort with somebody you need to be reasonably confident that that person is - let's say, to use that word - 'free'; in other words there are not going to be complications of the sort that I have mentioned, because that isn't good for anybody. It can lead to jealousy, possessiveness, misunderstanding, hatred, and all the rest of it. It's not just a question of not infringing any legal marriage rights or anything like that, but just keeping your relationships with people and communications with other people relatively uncomplicated, uncluttered.

And this is especially the case where both, or all three, of you belong to one and the same social group. If it's a question of some experience in passing with someone that you'll never meet again - well, that is a little different. But if it's within your normal social milieu you have to be particularly careful because all sorts of repercussions can be set up, all sorts of complications created.

I have known some unfortunate cases where male Order Members have whipped [i.e. stolen] the girlfriend of a Mitra, thereby giving rise to very negative feelings on the part of that Mitra towards the Order Member and towards the Order, and even towards the whole FWBO. So clearly in such cases the Order Member who does that sort of thing does not act with a sufficient sense of responsibility, either towards himself, the two other people concerned, or even the whole Movement. (General Agreement)

So I think it's these sorts of considerations which need to be borne in mind here, not just the question of not committing adultery in a merely legalistic sense. Do you see what I mean? (General Agreement)

Kulananda: I think also you can't take people's word for it. You can believe they're unattached, they can say they're [116] unattached, but when it comes down to it, all sorts of things come out. These 'open-ended commitments' are quite common and usually deceptive.

Mike Howes: I find that, in my experience, it's quite common for women especially to not take up a new attachment - they can't let go of the old attachment until they've got the new one; so that in fact adultery is inevitable, because they can't let go.

S: Well, that's an interesting point of view. In other words, if what you say is correct, a

woman always wants to be able to be sure of a man. She can't let go because then she won't have a man. She's got to be sure of having a new one before she can let go of the old one. Well, this is what you say; I'm not necessarily saying it. But it is an interesting point of view. (Laughter)

Mike Howes: I'm saying that that's happened.

S: I'm willing to believe that in certain cases that does hold good. So, perhaps, if you find a woman pursuing you then ask yourself: 'Well, who is she trying to get rid of?' (Laughter)

Kulananda: 'Who am I replacing?'

S: Yes. It might be your best friend.

Kulananda: It's been known to happen.

Dharmananda: It's rather like that TV series The Prisoner. It was about a man who was imprisoned in a village. He was 'Number Two' and his continuous question was: Who is 'Number One'? (Pause)

Mike Howes: When you said - a very slight side-issue - in terms of responsibility, even if there isn't a third party involved, you start a sexual relationship in the orbit of the Friends, you actually have to think of the implications of that sexual relationship perhaps going wrong it's quite likely ...

S: Oh yes. This is all the more so within the Order, because - I don't want to over-generalize - when relationships, that is sexual-cum-emotional relationships, break-up they very often, or quite often at least, break-up in a somewhat messy fashion, with negative feelings left. So supposing two people within the Order, say an Upasaka and Upasika, have a relationship and it breaks up, there is the likelihood of a residue of negative feelings on both sides. And if they are both members of the Order that cannot but affect the Order to some extent. So therefore one has to be very careful. I know that at least one Order Member has taken the view that there should be no sexual relationships within the Order for that reason. (Pause) Well, it's a point of view; one Order Member has stated that.

[117]
Mike Howes: That's between Order Members, rather than celibacy?

S: Yes, for that reason mainly: when they break-up, they can on occasions break-up so messily and leaving such a legacy of ill-feeling.

Mike Howes: That could be Order Members and Mitras, or Order Members and Friends as well perhaps?

S: Yes; one should at least consider that. Or supposing you're having to work with somebody with whom you are having a relationship; complications may come up. Those misunderstandings which pertain to your relationship may be carried over into the work situation; perhaps even vice versa.

Kulananda: This is almost exclusively the case with heterosexual relationships; people of the same sex usually don't come to such complications.

S: Well, I wouldn't be completely sure of that. Perhaps it is less likely to happen, but again I wouldn't like to over-generalize. (Pause)

Sumitra: It seems like it's quite a male attitude: the attitude of being involved in a sexual way but not in an emotional way, or even giving consideration to that possibility.

S: But didn't you suggest earlier on that you could not be not involved emotionally?

Sumitra: Yes, but I mean that on an intellectual level that's the way men tend to see it I think. But the emotional relationship exists almost without their knowledge. They don't acknowledge it. I feel that that's the case quite often; there is an idea that men have that they can be involved without being emotionally attached or without there being a strong emotional element. And I just question whether that's true.

S: Well, to begin with, it would seem highly unlikely that when one is engaged in sexual activity there should be no emotional element present whatsoever; that would seem to be virtually impossible though it may be a relatively negative or relatively positive state. You may be experiencing emotions of disgust or hatred at that particular time; that is also possible. Those also are emotions. I think it's very unlikely that no emotion will be present at all. (Pause) But, as you say, it may well be that very often the emotions involved in such a situation aren't openly acknowledged. But they are there nonetheless.

But I think when people speak in terms of being involved in a sexual relationship in a detached sort of way, I don't think they mean that the relationship is entirely devoid of feeling, but that there are only certain kinds of feeling present: those feelings that don't result in over-attachment. [118] They may just be feelings of warmth or friendliness or tenderness, and it may not go any further than that. Those sorts of feelings don't lead to clinging; so the person has a relatively detached sexual relationship or sexual experience. The emotion is there, but it isn't the sticky sort of emotion that is usually experienced in those sorts of situations.

But of course sometimes the other person, the partner, say the woman, will even complain that you are not 'emotionally involved'. Actually what she means is you're not emotionally involved in a particular way - very likely an unskilful way. It is not that you are not emotionally involved; there is an emotional element, maybe a strong one, but it's more of the nature of friendliness, warmth and tenderness, not of attachment, dependence and clinging. So I think one has to make that distinction, because sometimes people who have simply feelings of warmth and friendliness as distinct from, say, attachment and dependence are accused of being cold.

Sumitra: Yes. In a way that defines love as it is understood in a popular sense: that clinging, that attachment. So you could almost describe that as an unskilful mental state to be in.

S: So if marriage is based to some extent on that well, to that extent marriage is an unskilful state. But if the emotional element in marriage is one of friendliness and companionship and mutual sympathy well then, that's another matter. That is not then unskilful; to that extent the

marriage is not based on an unskilful element. (Pause)

But anyway the drift of the discussion so far seems to indicate that one has to be quite circumspect in getting involved in relationships. One cannot afford to allow oneself to be swept off one's feet by passion, however enjoyable that may seem at the time or however inevitable or necessary or whatever. And the feelings and reactions of third parties and other people have to be borne in mind, have to be taken into consideration.

Kulananda: The relationship, as we know it in Britain, seems to be a peculiarly British affair. In many other countries I know of in the West you don't get that sort of stickiness; women seem a lot freer.

S: I'm not so sure about that. It's said that, for instance, some French and Italian and Spanish women can become violently jealous if they suspect that you are indulging in any little hanky-panky outside the connubial home. You might well find a dagger planted in your bosom one fine evening!

Chris Harper: I get the impression that relationships in America seem to be quite neurotic.

Mike Howes: According to Fromm, anyway [i.e. Erich Fromm].

Chris Harper: According to the movies I've seen anyway! (Laughter]

[119]
S: Anyway, it does all seem rather self-evident, doesn't it? So maybe there is no need to insist on the point.
But there is this other question: of not being seen among - as I called them - 'courtesans'? One could translate it 'prostitutes', but prostitution in the rather squalid commercial sense seems not to have been known in India in the Buddha's day. A courtesan was a sort of lady who was setup in her house, a house of her own sometimes by arrangement with the local council, as in the case of Ambapali and who received gentlemen and accepted presents from them and didn't marry anybody. So that seems to have been rather different. Perhaps there was the more vulgar sort of prostitution but it seems on the whole not to have been like that.

So, anyway, why is it a source of downfall to be not content with one's own wife and not just to go with the wives of others but to frequent courtesans? Why should that be a source of decline and downfall? Again, is it due to the element of discontent?

Dharmananda: I think also it's quite a materialistic way of relating to another person.

S: Also, of course, if you're married you have the feelings of your wife to consider. That hasn't entered into the discussion yet. There is that, isn't there? I mean, if you have become discontented with your wife and maybe she is discontented with you, it probably doesn't help things for you, without having really sorted things out with your wife one way or the other, simply to go off to other women. Do you see what I mean? That probably just makes things worse or at least makes them rather more complicated.

Sumitra: This was something Subhuti was talking about the other evening. He was saying that in France in the eighteenth century it was quite socially accepted that you had a wife and that

was your social partner and you had a mistress with whom you had your passion. That was where the passion was involved and your wife was a sort of social accoutrement and somebody with whom you had your children.

S: Well, of course we mustn't forget that this only applied to a certain section of French society; and why should it apply? How did this come up? This is because marriages were always arranged marriages. And they were arranged for considerations of family alliance and property and so on; the feelings of the people concerned didn't enter into it. So a sort of convention developed that, all right, you would go along with the marriage which your parents had arranged for you for various good social, maybe political, reasons; but you expected to be able to have a mistress or a lover of your own choice, provided you kept it discreet. And that was sort of accepted in that circle by all concerned. Do you see what I mean? That was rather different, yes?

Kulananda: Didn't the Greeks, the Athenians, have an altogether more comprehensive set of relationships?

[120]
S: Well, the Greeks considered sex to pertain to marriage and romance to pertain to your relationships with your friends of the same sex. They sort of divided sex from romantic love in that sort of way.

Kulananda: Didn't they also have courtesans?

S: They had these hetaerae, the 'companions'. There weren't very many of them, just a handful. But they were ladies usually of foreign extraction actually, not native Athenians - who were better educated than ordinary Athenian wives, who were more intelligent and trained in the arts, with whom you could have intelligent conversation - enlivened perhaps in some cases with a little sex. And they certainly formed a distinct category in Athenian society. I don't know whether they were known in other Greek cities, but they certainly were known in Athens and there were some whose names have come down to us, like Aspasia.

Kulananda: Like the Japanese geishas?

S: They were a bit like the Japanese geisha girls, who certainly weren't ordinary prostitutes.

Mike Howes: A higher class of people? (S: Yes) In certain Chinese cities - I think of Singapore, where I've visited - it seems - I'm not sure how widely it's accepted that men are permitted in their society to go to a prostitute.

S: Well, I think this is very largely because marriages are arranged, or were arranged under the old Chinese social system. So you respected your wife and you honoured her as the mother of your children, but you weren't expected to be sexually faithful to her; that was something else. Perhaps she didn't expect you to be sexually faithful. If you were well-to-do, you had concubines; the wife accepted these usually. Sometimes she selected them for you. But they took good care to be very respectful towards your wife; she was the mistress of the house and she would brook no impertinence from little concubines! They did not prejudice her position in any way. That's a quite different sort of social setup.

Kulananda: In our society women are threatened by sexual challenges, as it were. (Pause)

S: I don't think it's really quite like that. My own feeling - and here I'm thinking aloud a little and generalizing a bit from my admittedly limited experience within the FWBO, not speaking about society at large perhaps but it seems to me, as far as I've observed, that a lot of women are very insecure and they have a very poor self-image of themselves, and it seems they are dependent on men or dependent on a man to give them a feeling of worth. You know, if some man falls in love with them or if he's devoted to them or dependent on them, then they feel that that invests them with a certain worth; they're wanted. So if a man isn't in that sort of [121] relation to them then they feel almost as though they don't exist in some cases. There is of course the sexual element but I think this is even stronger, at least with some women.

Sumitra: In the time of the Buddha, when this verse was spoken, how were marriages organized then? Were they arranged marriages?

S: Some were, some weren't. At present of course in India, in Indian Hindu society, practically all marriages are arranged, but it does seem that in the Buddha's day things were a bit freer, especially among the ksatriyas perhaps. There are references to various forms of marriage including one in which the bride chose the bridegroom. According to legend, later legend, this is supposed to be the way in which the Buddha was selected as a husband by Yasodhara. A number of young princes - according to this admittedly later legend - were so to speak lined up and she went along the line with her garland and then popped it over the head of Siddhartha. This is probably not historical, but it does show that either in the time of the Buddha or shortly afterwards there certainly was this custom.

One Buddhist text does mention different types of marriage: There's the marriage where it's arranged by the parents; then the marriage where the couple arrange it mutually between themselves; and then where the bride chooses the bridegroom by putting a garland around his neck; and then where the marriage takes place through abduction, or seduction this was socially recognized in the Buddha's day; or purchase, taking a wife by purchase that type of marriage was also recognized. They're all called marriage and they're all called 'wives', but perhaps the last category is more like slave-concubine.

So there was probably a greater variety of arrangements in the Buddha's day than we have here in the modern West. And a greater variety of socially accepted and recognized forms of marriage. But maybe we are a bit more flexible nowadays; I mean common law marriage is recognized isn't it? Then of course in the Buddha's day polygamy was accepted.

Mike Howes: What about the contrary one to that?

S: Polyandry seems to have been known among certain communities.

Sumitra: How much of a difference do you think it makes whether or not your wife has been chosen for you or the marriage has been arranged in some way? Or if you've actually chosen your wife as a sort of a love relationship? Does that strongly colour the unskilfulness of 'being seen with courtesans'? Is it a question of the way in which you have entered into the relationship?

S: No, within the Indian context not. Because Indian arranged marriages seem on the whole to

be quite successful and quite happy. And the young people concerned grow up expecting to [122] enter into this sort of marriage and usually they've got full confidence that their parents will do the best that they can for them. And usually parents and other elders take a lot of care, a lot of trouble, over finding suitable matches. And the young couple have confidence that their parents have really done the best for them that they could. And usually, certainly under traditional conditions, they're firmly convinced that they themselves couldn't have done as well for themselves as their parents could; and therefore they accept their parents' choice quite happily. The girl especially is given a lot of training along these lines. She's convinced that her parents really do love her and that her parents have taken great care to find her a good husband, maybe made many sacrifices ...

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Cassette Seven, Side Two

S: ... grateful for that. That's the sort of attitude. Not: 'Oh, I haven't got the freedom. I've been deprived of my freedom. They're imposing a husband on me.' This is totally unknown apart from Western influences. Of course, it does occasionally happen that parents aren't all that careful, or maybe some other consideration enters in, but that is quite exceptional. And also there's the strong religious sanction that the wife must regard her husband as god. The Hindu girl is brought up to believe that she must be like Sita and regard her husband as Rama and serve him faithfully. That is her duty. And if she serves him faithfully, she will go to heaven: that is her religion. A woman doesn't need any other religion except to please and serve her husband. This is what orthodox Hindu girls believe and they act upon it and it does make for peace and harmony and happiness in the home. (Noises of Astonishment) Do you see what I mean? She feels that she is not only fulfilling herself as a woman in being a true and faithful wife, she feels that she is following her religion even, sort of, following the path to salvation. And this is still very strong. I mean, it's not always spelled out as explicitly and crudely as I've spelled it out, but these feelings and these assumptions are very much in the air and influence people quite strongly.

Mike Howes: I remember seeing a television programme a while back about an Indian girl in this country and the psychological crisis she faced a real crisis.

S: Yes, because she's subjected to quite contrary sets of influences: one coming from the home, that she's to grow up to be a little Sita and serve her husband as Sita served Rama; and another contrary set of influences, that she should express herself and be free and liberated, go out with boys of her own choice, etc, etc. These are completely contrary. So, obviously, this subjects the Indian girl brought up in England to terrible stresses and strains. It's difficult for the young men also, but it's even more difficult for the girls. And this [123] to some extent is the case of girls in westernized families in India, though there aren't so many families westernized to that extent.

But I would say their traditional system seems to work better than our modern Western system in terms of just human happiness.

Mike Howes: Which then in turn is better for growth and people's development? Because of the happiness?

S: I would think so, yes. I don't want to idealize situations though, and sometimes things can go wrong, but I think on the whole family life and married life in India seems to be quite a bit more happy than it is in this country.

Mike Howes: That seems to be contrary to the commonly held view amongst many women that the crisis created by their own freedom actually helps their growth.

S: No, I wouldn't say that, no. I wouldn't say that Indian women are behind Western women when it comes to growth. Maybe I shouldn't say 'individuals' outside the specifically spiritual context, but, yes, they're certainly not less human beings, in fact in some ways they're more admirable than a lot of women in this country. They've got a higher degree of emotional positivity, they seem more at peace with themselves, they seem more happy, more content. Of course, the liberated Western woman might argue: 'Well, it's the contentment of a cow, etc, etc. They're enslaved and don't know it. Slaves who don't know it are always content; and you've got to make them discontented.' I don't really agree with that.

So I think when we carry on our own work FWBO work in India we have to be quite careful not to do harm as well as good, not to disrupt a social system among the Buddhists where we're not in a position to offer them anything better.

Sumitra: Well, it would seem on the evidence that a relationship based on love and free choice is less liable to success than one that doesn't have quite so much expectation invested in it in the beginning.

S: Well, no, in a way there are expectations, but they are of a different kind. The Indian wife expects that she will do her duty. She expects to be faithful to her husband, and she expects him to be faithful to her; but she also expects that she will be happy and content with him. And normally the idea of another man couldn't enter her head.

Chris Harper: So do I take it then that adultery is very rare in India?

S: It's quite rare. It does occur, especially among the lower castes where women mix freely with men when they're working, say as coolies. And sometimes lower caste women are exploited, even married women. Say, for instance, there is a gang of women coolies working - there is always a male foreman. [124] Sometimes he does exploit the women in that way; it's not unknown. Though the higher you go in the social scale, the less likelihood there is of that sort of thing.

Chris Harper: It's not the other way around, as it were? It's not the higher class people taking more liberties with the actual system at all?

S: No, as you go higher in the social system - in the caste system that means - morals are stricter.

Chris Harper: That's interesting. It's the other way around in this country.

S: Well, with one or two exceptions. For instance, princely families: they may be quite exceptional. But even then it's different, because they haven't got a bad conscience about it; it's part of their privilege, as it were, as members of that particular caste or community.

Maybe it's also part of their dharma. They might say: 'Well, that is the way a king should behave. A king should have plenty of concubines, he should have plenty of women around. It's part of his duty to keep up his princely state in that sort of way.' Again their attitude is rather different from our's. That could be accepted by other castes, saying: 'Well, it's ok for kings and princes, but it's not ok for us. They are right in doing it, and we are right in not doing it.'

But, again, there's one aspect of it we haven't gone into: this question of the courtesan or the prostitute. Is there anything especially unskilful in having recourse to prostitutes? Have you ever thought about that?

Kulananda: Prostitutes? Yes, I would say that's degrading other people.

Mike Howes: You're reinforcing their unskilful behaviour.

S: All right; let's question the assumption. Is their behaviour, from their point of view, unskilful? If so, why? Don't take anything for granted.

Kulananda: Well, prostitution is unskilful inasmuch as it increases adultery, or it's generally ...

S: All right, supposing - just to make the argument stricter - supposing the prostitute herself is a free woman, supposing her customers are all young men who are not yet married. Is the fact that she is a prostitute unskilful? In other words, for her, does prostitution constitute wrong means of livelihood? Because prostitution differs from promiscuity inasmuch as the commercial interest is there.

Chris Harper: That's it. She's exploiting other people's passions, and making a living from that. And that, to me, seems to be an unskilful element.

[125]
S: But supposing someone argues: Well, a young man is a young man; his sexual appetites are quite healthy; and if he just indulges those he's not doing any harm. If the prostitute is there for that particular purpose, it means he's not going with married women. So what would you say to that?

Sumitra: I think it comes down to the emotional element involved; that there's something quite strange about having, performing, a sexual act with somebody who really just isn't emotionally involved at all. I think that's got to have a very negative effect on the man and also I think it's got to have a negative effect on the woman.

S: The objections do seem to be psychological. Because, for instance, you cannot emotionally relate to thirty or forty people a day. That is psychologically impossible. So, in order to be able to relate to them sexually that number of times a day, well, you just have to cut off from them emotionally. Do you see what I mean? So there comes to be a dissociation of your emotions from your sexual activity. And a number of prostitutes, I gather, do say that after a while they're unable to become involved emotionally with men. And this is why many prostitutes again, so it is reported turn to other women for emotional or emotional-cum-sexual relationships; because as far as men are concerned they can no longer associate emotion with

sexuality.

So if you are being forced, so to speak, into that extremely intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex and repeatedly, many many times, maybe for years on end, and emotion never enters into it, this must do you great psychological harm. And in the case of the man, well, it cannot do him any good to relate to someone who is in that state. Because if she is not relating to him emotionally, well, he certainly cannot relate to her emotionally. So the relationship, the sexual transaction between them, becomes an extremely alienated sort of affair and this again cannot be good for either.

And then again there is the fact that one could say well perhaps it wouldn't be correct to say that the prostitute is exploiting men; perhaps that would be too strong - but certainly she is, so to speak, encouraging them or permitting them to relate to her in an extremely one-sided sort of way which cannot possibly do them any good.

So in a way it's a quite inhuman sort of relationship; it can't be an animal relationship. Two human beings cannot have a purely animal relationship, because they're not animals. You can notice the behaviour of, say, chickens in the farmyard: the cockerel will jump on the back of the hen just as she is scratching around; she just clucks and shakes her feathers and it means nothing to her whatever. There's no emotional element in the human sense involved at all. Similarly with other, higher, animals. But in the case of man, even the most animal-like man is still human, there is still this question of emotion.

So to relate to some other human being, a member of the opposite sex, in this sort of purely functional sexual sense [126] cannot be good; the sexual experience itself cannot be really very satisfying: at best a sort of - well, almost clinical release, nothing more than that, which is emotionally quite unsatisfying.

Mike Howes: Some of these arguments presumably apply also to promiscuity, because it's another form of bartering of sex ..

S: Yes, yes. There's another aspect which I've considered myself and which has been considered by people in the past: the so to speak spiritual point of view strictly or even psychic point of view. There is such a thing as atmosphere - or to use a word which is very useful though very imprecise - there are such things as vibrations If you are meditating, if your mind is in a meditative state, a certain vibration is set up, even a certain vibration in the atmosphere surrounding you. Sometimes it's perceptible. So according to your mental state - and that means mainly your emotional state, whether more or less refined - a sort of aura surrounds you.

But supposing in the case of the prostitute the emotions that are involved are of the crudest kind, on the crudest level, and she is constantly the object of those very crude sexual feelings; if that sort of vibration is always surrounding her, well, when you have to do with her you enter into that sort of field of vibrations of that sort and that surely cannot do you any good.

But, as Mike said, in a way the same sort of thing applies to promiscuity, certainly extreme promiscuity. I would even draw a sort of comparison. Someone who meditates brings all of his or her own energies together - you know, you feel sometimes that this person is integrated, their energy is all together. You actually get this sort of feeling in another sort of way

sometimes with Indian women, Indian wives that is to say, because their feelings are so centred on their husbands. They just don't go here and there towards other men at all; they just don't think in that way. So it's as though their emotions are well-integrated. I'm not saying that there may not be a strong element of attachment - yes, I expect there must be - but you do get this impression that they are very integrated emotionally. And this certainly gives them in the best cases a sort of air.

Chris Harper: Perhaps you could also say that promiscuity is not a totally good thing from the point of view [that] it encourages a division between sexuality and emotion.

S: Ah, no, we must be a bit careful here. If you were, say, normally in a friendly positive mental state, and remaining in that friendly positive state you also have a sexual relationship with someone, well, that can't really be described as negative or unskilful. Do you see what I mean?

The negativity or unskilfulness creeps in when there is attachment and clinging and craving and jealousy and so on. Some people do seem to be able to be promiscuous - let us say for want of a better word - quite happily and healthily because they've got perhaps a positive outgoing friendly sort [127] of temperament which remains, so to speak, in operation even when they enter into a sexual relationship.

Chris Harper: When we talk about promiscuity, are we including the situation when you have more than one sexual relationship? Does what you've just said cover that?

S: No. I think you might say that in the case of promiscuity you don't have relationships; you have 'brief encounters' from time to time. Do you see what I mean? There's friendliness, and, yes, you satisfy the sexual need for the time being; there's no question in your mind of forming a relationship. And you have a series of such encounters. That is promiscuity in the more, let's say, healthy sense.

It is possible for promiscuity to be unskilful: that is when it is compulsive, in the case of the male sometimes when it's a sort of 'scalp-hunting', adding up how many women you can seduce in the course of a month or something of that sort. That sort of promiscuity, which is compulsive and based on a sense of insecurity or a need to prove oneself, is unhealthy.

But if for instance someone is normally in a happy friendly state of mind but from time to time feels a sexual urge and satisfies that without forming a relationship on that basis and then after a while the situation repeats itself - well, that is promiscuity in the more healthy sense - assuming that the other person with whom you've had that sort of encounter is of the same kind so that they also don't become attached to you, they are also quite satisfied and happy with a sexual-cum-friendly encounter.

Mike Howes: That seems to be the problem, because there are quite few I would guess - and I'm certainly not one of them - who are healthy enough to actually just go into and out of a relationship. And to get a man and a woman together at one time [who are both like that] ...

S: Well, I've avoided using the word 'relationship'. I've preferred this term 'brief encounter'. So yes, a lot of people want to make something of it, to continue it: 'Why don't we meet again tomorrow?' Whereas if it's just a question of satisfying ... If you're a healthy person, when

you've satisfied the sexual urge, well, it'll be satisfied and you won't be bothered again for a while. But if it isn't just a question of satisfying the sexual urge, if there's some unhealthy mental element involved, if you're trying to satisfy some craving, well, then you won't even be satisfied by the sexual experience. You'll go looking for something more, with somebody else perhaps, and that's the more unskilful kind of promiscuity neurotic and compulsive.

Sumitra: In what you were saying about the vibrations or whatever that you might pick up from a prostitute, if you were meditating would that make you more able to combat that kind of influence or would it make you more receptive to it?

S: Oh! I think both - though not both at the same time. I [128] think if you were a sort of relative beginner in meditation and so on, you would be more susceptible, you would be more sensitive and more badly affected. If you were more advanced and your meditation was more strongly established and you were much more definitely in a positive state of mind, then you wouldn't be so badly affected; but then in that case you would be very unlikely to go near a prostitute.

Sumitra: I was just wondering about that in a more general sense - in terms of the people you associate with. Because that would seem to indicate that, having taken up a meditation practice, you've got to be more careful of those people who are involved in unskilful activity of whatever kind.

S: Right, yes, indeed you have. You have to be more careful with whom you associate. One doesn't need to be precious about it but it does have an effect. And clearly, looking at it in more positive terms, if you can associate with people who are also into their meditation and whom you can regard as real kalyana mitras, well, so much the better for you. That will have a distinctly positive effect on you.

Prajnananda: That's why it's so important to have a good environment for people to come back to from a retreat I think. Because when you start off - I can remember in my experience coming back from retreats in the early days and feeling quite opened up and, yes, quite suggestible, and after a while I started to realize I had to be quite careful what I did and who I saw.

Mike Howes: I can remember going back home to Wiltshire after a retreat and being destroyed!

S: Well, in the very early days, as I think I've said before - after our very early retreats in the late 'sixties, early 'seventies, before we had communities for people to go back to - at the end of a retreat people used to be clustered at the entrance to the retreat place, unwilling to leave, just not wanting to go back home. And they all had homes to go back to ... And some [were] even crying. They left at the last possible moment, caught the last train. They just didn't want to go back. They almost sensed what they were going back to. No doubt their wife or husband would have been glad to see them, etc, etc; maybe a friendly welcome awaited them; but nonetheless they didn't feel happy to go back. Now, of course, people can go back into communities after retreats. And that's a very, very big thing.

But just to summarize what we've been saying: I have made the point before - I think in a seminar last year - that we talk about lifestyles and your lifestyle is of course very much tied

up with your sexual relationships or otherwise. I mean, for most people the type of sexual relationship they have structures their lifestyle. If you are married, that means you live together, you and your wife live together; and that means you usually have children. That means you've got to support them. That means you've got to have a job. In that way [129] your whole lifestyle is determined.

So I have said that there are three primary lifestyles from the point of view of one's sexual relationships. You can either be celibate or you can be married or you can be promiscuous. And in each case there is a positive and a negative form. Do you see what I mean? You can be married skilfully, relatively speaking, and you can be married unskilfully. You can be celibate skilfully, and you can be celibate unskilfully. You can be promiscuous skilfully, and you can be promiscuous unskilfully. Do you see that? I think it's pretty obvious.

Supposing we take the case of marriage first. You can be married out of feelings of mutual insecurity, a desire to cling to each other; you can be addicted to each other. This is unskilful marriage. Skilful marriage is one in which your primary feeling for each other is just one of friendliness: you enjoy each other's company. There is no undue attachment or dependence. Yes, the sexual element is there and is quite satisfactory, but you regard each other primarily as good friends and probably together you are engaged in the work or the task of bringing up a family and you cooperate. That's the work you are engaged on together; and you get happiness from doing that. So this you could say is marriage in a positive sense.

Then if you come on to celibacy: well, you can be celibate because you feel guilty about sex, because you're afraid of sex, because you think it's dirty and nasty and you shouldn't get involved in it, etc, etc. That is negative celibacy. Or because you are naturally in a sort of meditative frame of mind, emotionally very positive within yourself,and you just don't feel any need for sex, it just doesn't bother you, you just don't think about it; you're naturally celibate. Or you may feel that, for a time at least, celibacy would be a useful discipline and contribute to your individual development: all right, therefore you take a vow of celibacy for a while. So this is positive.

And then with regard to promiscuity: If you are promiscuous because you are neurotic and compulsive in your sexuality and you always have to prove something to yourself, well, that's negative. But if you are a happy positive person who from time to time feels a sexual need and who satisfies it with whoever happens to be around and willing, without forming any sort of relationship, well, that's positive promiscuity.

So all these three lifestyles are quite viable and compatible with a spiritual life and spiritual development; provided it's in the positive form and not the negative.

Kulananda: Provided they don't spill into each other.

S: So I think one needs to be pretty clear as to where one stands at any given time or for any given period. Sometimes it may be difficult to say. Some people may be very mildly promiscuous; they may have these brief encounters one or twice a year. Well, you could say that in between they are practising celibacy. It's almost as though they alternate [130] between celibacy and promiscuity. Or someone may for instance be married but may be separated from his wife from time to time and then become quite naturally and quite happily celibate for a while. But I think there are these three basic patterns of lifestyle from this particular point of

view, and each of them can take either a positive or a negative form.

Mike Howes: There seems to be an assumption, though, in Buddhist tradition, and in other religious traditions, that celibacy is more conducive to spiritual growth.

S: It does seem that positive celibacy is; I think it is more or less agreed. But not just celibacy as a discipline or encouraged from without or entered upon out of feelings of guilt and so on - which of course is very often the case. I think one can say that, other factors being equal, as someone develops spiritually they will tend to become more celibate well, more celibate than they were before. And also of course different people may start from different standards. So what is relative celibacy for one may be unbridled promiscuity for another. (Laughter) Anyway, perhaps we've dwelt long enough upon that. Because we have to get on to these other ...

Chris Harper: Can I just ask one point about that first? I want to pick up on a word: 'seen with'. It seems strange that it's translated or if it's actually written that way. Is it?

S: It is written that way. That I think is just the Pali idiom. I don't think it is meant to be suggested that if you are not seen it doesn't matter! (Laughter) - that what the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve over. I don't think that that is intended.

Chris Harper: So it's just idiom. It just seemed strange that it was written in that way - 'to be seen with'.

S: Well, perhaps you could say that it's sort of reached that pitch of shamelessness that the person no longer bothers: he's openly immoral, so to speak. He's actually seen with the wives of others; he doesn't even bother to conceal it any more. That is an even more extreme form of the same unskilful behaviour: you've lost all sense of shame or modesty.

Chris Harper: Surely the verse would actually be stronger if it just said 'not satisfied with his own wife and associating with courtesans or the wives [of others]', because it would apply to more people.

S: Yes. I think if one is to attach any sort of meaning to the phrase that he is 'seen with courtesans' - or 'prostitutes' - 'and with the wives of others', it is to be understood that he's just become shameless. He's perhaps become so habituated to that sort of behaviour he no longer realizes what he's doing and forgets or doesn't realize that other people are observing. But certainly not that if it isn't seen it doesn't matter.

[131]
Chris Harper: So do you think it should be translated in this way? - to keep the word 'seen' in there?

S: I think so. I think I would keep the word 'seen' there, yes. One could say he 'is even seen with the wives of others' - perhaps that would convey it completely.

All right let's go on. I'm afraid we are still on much the same sort of topic. [Hare:] 'When man, passed youth, doth wed a maid with rounded breasts, nor sleeps for jealousy: a source of suffering that.' Then [Chalmers]: 'Tenth comes the dotard who, in failing age, a maiden takes

to wife, with ripe round breasts, so fair he cannot sleep for jealousy'. Again it's more poetic but more of a paraphrase. And then Saddhatissa: 'Being past one's youth, to take a young wife and to be unable to sleep for jealousy of her - this is a cause of one's downfall'.

Let me look at the Pali ... Yes, that's reasonably .. 'Ripe rounded breasts' is not quite ... It's really 'with prominent breasts' ... But the question arises: Why should an old man want to marry a young girl?

Sumitra: Regain lost youth?

S: Do you think that is it?

Kulananda: Well, young girls are quite attractive!

Sumitra: Yes, but why are they attractive?

Kulananda: Because youth is attractive.

Sumitra: But why is youth attractive?

Kulananda: For the same reason that beauty ...

S: What he's really asking is the difference between a young man being attracted by a young woman and an old man being attracted by a young woman and even marrying her.

Prajnananda: Perhaps there is a suggestion that older men should be occupied with more serious things; they should have matured into considerations of a more serious nature.

S: Yes, there is that suggestion. I think - I don't know - one gathers that the time comes when men reach a 'certain age', and they become a bit dissatisfied with their wives and they start casting their eyes on pretty young attractive office secretaries and so on. So what is happening here? Some say a man is conscious that his sexual powers are beginning to fail and wants to reassure himself in that respect. Is that so? Or is this just a flight of the psycho-analyst's imagination?

Mike Howes: I think it's probably so; I think I've seen it happen. At least, it's partly so ...

[132]
S: But what it also perhaps suggests is that if as an old man you're still preoccupied with young women sexually perhaps it means that you haven't passed through a natural process of maturation. Could it mean that? Or is that too idealistic? Let's assume, say, you've been married, you've got an old wife and you've grown old together; well, the assumption seems to be that you should have detached yourself as you get older from these sorts of mental states, should perhaps be thinking more about spiritual things. But if that hasn't happened, well, perhaps you will start casting your eyes on young women.

Prajnananda: There is this traditional Indian view that there are four stages to life, isn't there? By the time one's an old man one should have completed one's social responsibilities in bringing up a family and devote oneself to spiritual things.

S: But Buddhism doesn't quite subscribe to that inasmuch as it does envisage the possibility of young men going forth, which originally orthodox Hinduism didn't recognize.

But there is also another aspect to it: that the old man's attitude towards the young girl is more one of possessiveness. Maybe he's of a prominent position, he's well-to-do; he wants to collect whatever he thinks of as the appurtenances of his position all around him: you know, the big car, the big new house, the pretty young secretary, or the pretty young new wife. There's that. It's perhaps a sort of prestige thing too.

Or maybe it is due to the fact that he just won't accept the fact that he has grown old. He wants to try to create an illusion of youth by taking unto himself a young wife. He's resisting the process of growing old in an unskilful way.

Chris Harper: I think the second half of the verse certainly implies that.

S: Yes. There's this question of jealousy. He's jealous. And there are many humorous stories in the Pali Jataka book about old husbands and young wives. It's in some ways an unnatural combination. Sometimes there are young women who are attracted more to older men; whether it's really a healthy attitude that's another matter. But usually young women aren't attracted to older men; they are usually attracted to young men. So if a young woman does marry an old man what is it usually due to? What is it usually because of?

Mike Howes: Need for a father figure perhaps?

S: Well, leaving that aside.

Kulananda: Wealth and power?

S: Wealth, yes, and power, security. Especially perhaps wealth and social position. Women do differ, but for quite a few women in that position it would mean denying more basic fundamental instincts or feelings for the sake of some kind of social position; and this cannot be a recipe for happiness. Do you see what I mean? She has sort of sacrificed herself [133] sexually to the old man for the sake of the social position and the wealth which he can give her, the comfort that he can maybe surround her with. I think this is the sort of thinking that is behind this verse.

So there'll be a tension in the relationship. She perhaps will feel somewhat resentful towards the old man. Maybe things don't turn out as she expected, maybe she's not as happy as she thought she would be with the social position and the wealth. For his part he feels very possessive and therefore jealous. He's quite aware of the fact that he's old and she's young. He's aware of the fact that there are young men around that she may find more attractive than himself. This can't be a very happy situation. It's asking for trouble. It's a source of decline and downfall.

Is this sort of thing very common in our society do you think? Yes, it is sometimes, isn't it? One thinks of a prominent example as far as one can see it's an example: Jacquie Kennedy marrying old Onassis. That was a really odd sort of development, wasn't it?

Kulananda: It does seem to be mostly the case where there is a lot of money.

Chris Harper: It comes to public attention a lot more when it's the other way around. I remember seeing in the paper a while back this guy who was in his twenties or thirties who married this woman who was about eighty; and he was putting forward the notion that he had married her for love. She is quite wealthy I believe!

Mike Howes: It's easier to love someone then!

S: Well, I would say it's quite easy to love someone you thought was going to die in a few years' time and leave you a lot of money!

Mike Howes: Was it a problem in Indian society do you think at the Buddha's time? ... That, to get their children married well, parents would actually try and marry them to older men?

S: Of course it is the Indian tradition that the man should always be older than the woman; and in higher castes quite a bit older. They think this normal and right. Because they think that if the man's character is already formed and he is firm and knows his own mind, and if the wife is young, much younger than he is, and her character relatively unformed, well, this will make for a relatively harmonious relationship and less conflict. This is what they tend to think. But normally, even today, the wife is a little younger than the husband.

For a man to marry an older woman is regarded as very shameful; it's regarded as virtually incest. They say things like: 'Fancy marrying an older woman; it's like marrying your own mother.' This is what they say; they're really shocked and horrified by that. Among the lower castes - who again don't bother much about anything of this sort - sometimes it does [134] happen that the husband is two or three years younger than the wife. On that level, well, they're regarded as being virtually without morals - and in a sense they are. In a sense also it's quite healthy. But the higher you go in the social scale in India the less possibility there is of this sort of thing. They can't even imagine it. They're really quite disgusted when they hear of European men marrying women older than themselves. It seems really shocking. Is there anything in this? Is it, as it were, natural, or is it merely a convention, not to say a conditioning: that the wife should be as it were dependent on the husband? - and that that is more likely to be the case if she is younger? Is there anything to be said for this? Or is it just a sort of prejudice?

Sumitra: As far as I can see it always seems to be the female preference ...

End of Cassette Seven, Side Two

Cassette Eight, Side One

S: ... that if the man and the woman, the husband and wife, are to be equally mature, at least physically, that the man should be older than the woman. If she's mature at eighteen, he's not mature till he's twenty. (Pause) I think probably the rest doesn't require much discussion. But it does raise this question of jealousy. And jealousy can arise in other situations - it can arise in any relationship, not just between old husband and young wife; though perhaps in this particular case, in this particular kind of relationship, it arises in a particularly acute form. But jealousy in whatever form it arises is a pretty serious and baneful thing, isn't it?

So what is jealousy? It is something that people feel so easily, and most of all perhaps in connection with relationships, or just sex, with sexual jealousy. It's very, very strong and a very, very negative and unskilful emotion. So what is it? Why do people become jealous?

Mike Howes: It seems to be based on insecurity; needing to possess someone else to be secure, to become complete.

S: Yes, it's as though you've projected part of yourself on to the other person. Unless you have them with you and can be sure of them, you can't be sure of yourself, you don't possess yourself. So if you lose that other person, or they are unfaithful to you - especially sexually unfaithful - it's as though a portion of yourself has been torn away. This is how you feel. (General Agreement)

Kulananda: In my experience there are two forms of jealousy connected with women. There is the form you have described but there's also a more territorial form - which is in a sense much easier to deal with.

[135]
S: Ah yes: 'This woman belongs to me; you keep off!'

Kulananda: Even if you are no longer having a relationship with her and you had a fairly promiscuous encounter, when another bloke turns up you can feel a twinge of that. But you can deal with it usually; it's not so difficult.

S: But this is possessiveness rather than jealousy proper. Even though possessiveness does enter into jealousy, you can have possessiveness, it seems, without jealousy.

Kulananda: But I think that is more instinctual and is not quite so traumatic.

Chris Harper: It seems to me that, if you are jealous of someone else, that's because he's fulfilling something you want to be yourself, or doing something you want to do yourself.

S: But are you distinguishing between jealousy and envy?

Chris Harper: [Unclear]

S: I think what you are describing is nearer envy than jealousy. (Pause)

It is extraordinary the mental states that jealousy can give rise to. You might think that you are deeply in love with some woman but if you see her with some other man, and especially if you were to see her in a particular situation, you'd want to kill her. And that's really extraordinary. So what gives rise to hatred? Why that sort of hatred, that want to obliterate her? If anything your hatred is more directed against her than the man that she has been misbehaving with. It may be directed towards both, but it's more likely directed more strongly towards her.

Why is this? What on earth is happening? From a purely rational point of view, you might say: 'What does it really matter? I'm not really losing anything.' But apparently you are: something that is desperately important to you, something which is your life. It can probably

only be what I mentioned at the beginning: that you have invested a portion of your own being in her, and you feel that that is being taken away. You feel as though you yourself are being killed, in a sense, and therefore you want to kill. It seems to me that jealousy is one of the most negative of all the emotions and has no redeeming features whatever.

Mike Howes: I have to admit to having suffered quite a lot of jealousy in my life.

S: I think most people, to the extent that they have been emotionally involved with members of the opposite sex at all, have sometime or other experienced the pangs of jealousy. In those sorts of circumstances you don't feel just a little bit jealous, you feel very, very jealous.

[136]
Mike Howes: There is no such thing as being a little bit jealous, is there?

S: No, no. There is the example of Othello. That is not uncharacteristic. If you have got a relationship with someone and maybe you have arranged to meet, and they don't turn up, you can work yourself into quite a state and fantasize about what they might be doing and feel incredible jealousy. Then they come in, maybe completely innocently, and you feel in a terrible sort of mood towards them. You could almost kill them - until they give an explanation, and then you're very, very sorry. You blame yourself, accuse yourself, apologize, become more stupidly fond and lovey-dovey than ever you were. But an hour later you can swing in the opposite direction again and then back again. Isn't it so? (General Agreement)

Mike Howes: It seems that there are actually people who do not suffer jealousy. It's amazing.

S: Yes, there do seem to be a few. Perhaps they are very, very secure people. I think they are quite exceptional. You don't [experience jealousy]?

Sumitra: I've never felt it - not in the way that it's been described to me. Never. And also I've been in the situation where I would have expected it to arise. But it wasn't jealousy that I felt. I felt very emotionally cut up, but not possessive. I was just sad and upset; but not jealous.

S: Why do you think it is that a sexual-cum-emotional relationship always, almost necessarily, tends to exclusiveness and therefore to jealousy, more likely than not in the long run? Is it biological? Is it a bonding phenomenon to ensure that the couple remain together long enough to bring up the child until it reaches the age of independence?

Prajnananda: It seems the most obvious explanation.

Kulananda: It's often a case of people not having enough friendships actually. The communication between people is inadequate and because of the sexual intimacy they are more able to become intimate with their sexual partner.

S: Yes, that's true. Well, in India one really does notice that there are quite strong friendships between men -all of whom are, of course, married - as well as between women. Women seem to have strong friendships with one another more than here; I was observing them this time [I visited India]. They do have friendships; not the sort of silly, sentimental, womanish relationships like you sometimes see here. Particular women are good friends in the way that in the West we think of men being friends. They very often seem to have that sort of

friendship with one another.

Kulananda: What is often the case with men is that they feel less threatened by women than they do by other men sometimes [137] and so find it easier to get into sexual relationships and then they become exclusive.

S: Anyway, we are rather plumbing the depths in these verses. Let's pass on, because we ought to plumb them all before we finish.

Chris Harper: You don't have a translation of that [verse] yourself?

S: No. I think I'll have to work on one, finish it and let you have that. It won't be very difficult to do.

Now, in the next two verses, we are on to a different tack which is quite interesting. [Hare:] 'When woman or when man, a spendthrift or a sot, is placed in sovran power: a source of suffering that.' And then Chalmers: 'Eleventh failure's he who puts in charge a drunken spendthrift rake of either sex'. And then Saddhatissa: 'To place in authority a women given to drink and squandering, or a man of like behaviour - this is a cause of one's downfall.' Right, what is the Pali here? The word for authority is issariya which is 'rulership', 'lordship'. It is the same word that is used in another place for 'God'. 'God' is issara or ivara: 'the one who exercises rulership or lordship'. So to place in a position of rulership or lordship or authority a man or woman who is given to drink and wasting money, this is a source of downfall.

What sort of situation do you think is being envisaged here? Does it just concern the individual or perhaps the group? Perhaps we've come on to group downfall. Perhaps in a way the situation has become even more serious. I think this applies to the next verse too. Supposing in the group, in the position of responsibility, in the position of authority even, you have someone, whether man or woman, who is not fit to exercise that authority, will that not surely be a source of downfall for everyone in that group?

Prajnananda: It looks like we are talking about a climate of decadence and degeneration here, with anti-heroes rather than real heroes.

S: Yes ... It's as though for the group it's a source of downfall if authority rests in the hands of the wrong people, people who are not really fit to exercise it. Well, this is pretty obvious, isn't it? The same thing can apply within a smaller context: not just the state, [but] any group, any organization. If by one means or another, by hook or by crook, the wrong sort of people come into power, that will be a source of suffering, of decline and downfall, for the whole group.

Over supper we were talking about this ex-Chief Minister of Maharashtra, [name unclear]. That's a good example: a thoroughly unsuitable, unscrupulous person appointed virtually a Chief Minister of the State, a very important figure - and, yes, he was a source of downfall for that state in certain respects through his maladministration. So it becomes important within any group to have a system whereby, or [138] whereunder, only qualified people are able to rise to positions of authority. How can one secure that? Well, this has been debated fiercely ever since the time of Plato, ever since Plato wrote his Republic and said that philosophers should be kings and kings philosophers; only then could one have the perfect state. Well, maybe one agrees with that - but then there is the question of the precise mechanism to ensure

that that state of affairs comes about.

Mike Howes: All those verses talking about the group quite clearly seem to be pointing at the individual, saying not only have you the responsibility to look after yourself - not to get drunk but if you have influence or choice then you must play that influence very seriously.

S: Yes, that's true. Under a parliamentary democracy, if people stand for elections, then consider their qualifications very, very seriously before you exercise your vote. Of course, it's not even as simple as that; because all the different candidates in your opinion may be thoroughly unsuitable to exercise authority. Anyway, the verse does make it clear that this is important, that the wellbeing of the group depends upon well-qualified people being in positions of authority. And it's your duty as an individual, in so far as you are a member of a group, to ensure as best you can, to the best of your abilities, that only qualified people occupy positions of authority. If you yourself are invited to occupy a position of authority, you should carefully examine your own qualifications first before accepting. The Greeks and Romans would say no doubt that if you have the qualifications it is your duty to accept the call to authority.

Kulananda: It's a part of virya, isn't it?

S: It's a part of virya, you could say. So that same principle applies within the spiritual community, or within the spiritual movement, and this is why we say within the FWBO that 'power' to use that term 'should rest with the spiritually committed'. It's an application of that same principle on a slightly different level. (Pause)

Mike Howes: I've heard that expression before and not quite liked it; and I think why I haven't quite liked it is that power should not be vested in those with the trappings of spiritual growth, but those who actually are judged by those capable of judging.

S: But then of course it raises the question of who is capable of judging. There's no fool-proof mechanism. One has to recognize the principle and apply it as best one can.

Mike Howes: This personal responsibility is interesting, because it's very easy to be persuaded, or swayed by lobbying, even apparently quite positive lobbying, and this is almost stopping people making their own decisions.

[139]
S: It's your duty to make your own decisions. It's also your duty to make an informed decision. You must acquaint yourself with the subject properly first. Otherwise, in exercising responsibility, exercising your particular portion of power - your vote, for instance - is just frivolous if you haven't really studied the situation first before arriving at your decision.

Sumitra: I'm still a little bit bothered by this idea ... Say you are in a situation and in good faith you appoint somebody to a particular position and then you go away and you've got nothing more to do with it. But that person is not in fact suitable: i.e. they squander funds, their conduct isn't acceptable. In what way could that then affect your future? How is that a cause of downfall to you?

S: Well, the downfall consists in your acting irresponsibly; because if there is that sort of

possibility - that someone might fail to exercise properly the trust you have placed in them you should be around to monitor the situation, at least to some extent, and to intervene if necessary. Part of your responsibility is, in a sense, to see that you cannot really permanently just hand over your responsibility and then wash your hands of the matter. To continue to exercise supervision is also part of your responsibility, I would say. If you didn't do that you would have abdicated part of your responsibility and would not be exercising it. To that extent it would be a source of downfall; it would be downfall itself.

Sumitra: Now that's very interesting. I immediately relate that to coop managers and people intimately involved in that.

S: Yes. It is your duty to assure yourself that the person to whom you've entrusted responsibility is genuinely trustworthy within that particular context. If you've taken all reasonable steps to assure yourself of that, well, then you are absolved from blame if subsequently something does go wrong. But if, say, the situation is a bit chancey and maybe you knew quite well that certain difficult situations were going to arise which would strain the authority of that person or his capacity to exercise authority in a skilful manner, if you had just technically relinquished your responsibility by appointing him and just washed your hands of the matter, well, that would be very unskilful. You would not really have divested yourself of responsibility if you knew that that person wasn't really capable of exercising it. In that case you ought to stay around a bit longer just to keep an eye on things.

Dharmananda: It does seem to be an error that is being made quite frequently.

S: Well, sometimes committees, Councils in the FWBO can make this sort of mistake at a Council meeting. Somebody says: 'Who is willing to do such-and-such a job?' And somebody says: 'Oh, I will.' And the Council just accepts it without pausing to consider: Is that person, even though he has offered to do the [140] job, really in a position to do it? Is he able to do it? The Council has that responsibility because he may have offered to do it out of bravado, or without having considered the matter properly. So it is not enough for the Council to say afterwards: 'He said he'd do it.' It is your duty to ascertain that he really is able to say that he will do it! That is part of your responsibility as a Council.

Mike Howes: It seems to me that, if you can't be absolutely certain that a job's going to be done properly, which is true in most situations, you have an ongoing responsibility to at least monitor or supervise ...

S: Yes. Also it depends upon the particular kind of job. Some jobs will admit only of very minor mistakes that don't really matter. But other jobs may involve the possibility of really crucial mistakes being committed and then you have to be much more careful who you hand over to and much more careful about going away for very long. It's not enough to just find somebody who says he'll do the job, and then you feel you can just wash your hands of the matter now and just go away. No, you have only gone through the motions of being responsible. You've not really been responsible. You can't really hand over responsibility in that way. That isn't a genuine handing over of responsibility. So you can see this simple verse has got applications of all sorts.

In fact the verse says: ' .. is placed in sovran power.' It's not even that he seized power. In that case you might say your responsibility was less. But he or she has been placed in power.

There are other people placing that person. So they've got the responsibility of assuring themselves that the person that they have placed in power, in authority, is genuinely able to exercise that in a positive and beneficent and skilful manner. You are responsible for the mistakes made by those that you have appointed to be your masters, politically speaking.

Mike Howes: It seems to me that it's a cry that I seem to have heard a lot lately: 'But he said he was going to do something!' The judgement should have been that he couldn't have done it in the first place.

S: Right, or shouldn't have said he would do it. No, it's your job, your duty, your responsibility, to ascertain that he is able to match his actions to his words. Here again you've only gone through the motions of exercising responsibility. You haven't really been responsible.

Mike Howes: It's easy to imagine situations where you find somebody who says: 'Yes', and you go: 'Wow! Great!', and move on and drop the whole problem.

S: And sometimes there's not even sufficient clarity as to what it is that that person has actually agreed to do, or to take on. Sometimes there's misunderstanding and confusion. He thinks he's agreed to do one thing and you think [141] he's agreed to do something else. That happens sometimes, doesn't it?

For instance, just to give you an example: I was asking someone in the community about the care of the green plants and he said: 'Well, Kulananda said he'd look after those.' Then somebody else said: 'No, Kulananda said he would consider looking after them.' It's an important distinction, isn't it? It's quite a different thing to say that you will consider doing something. That's very different from saying that you will do it. Of course, you also have the responsibility for considering, if you say that you will consider. (I'm not talking about this particular instance!) But you really must consider. It could be that there is a third alternative, which is that the second chap might have been wrong. I don't know; I'm just citing it as an example. But you see what I mean?

For instance, within the Order it applies when people express willingness to be kalyana mitras. Someone asks them to be their kalyana mitras and they agree. But then it has to be considered by the local chapter whether they are really able to be kalyana mitras. It's another application of this principle. That they should say that they are willing is not enough. So, therefore, we discuss in a chapter meeting whether they are able to be kalyana mitras.

Anyway, let's go on to the last verse because that's also not unlike this one. This is Hare: 'When born of noble clan, a man is poor and craves for much and longs to rule: a source of suffering that.' Then Chalmers: 'Twelfth comes th' ambitious noble, lacking means, who fondly schemes to get himself made king.' And then Saddhatissa: 'If a member of an influential family (or social or other grouping), with vast ambition and of slender means, seeks power or control over others - this is a cause of one's downfall.' This last translation really seems to make it much more clear.

What sort of situation is envisaged here? Lifting it out of its original Indian context? (Pause) Appabhogo - 'of very little means' - mahatanho - 'of great craving' - 'a ksatriya is born in a certain family, and covets rulership or kingship', 'is ambitious for rulership or kingship'.

There are several factors here: he has very little means, and has got vast ambition; and also in this case he's born in a ksatriya family and ksatriyas usually do exercise rule; and he wants to get himself made king or to exercise authority. So he's got a certain justification in this case in his birth, in the fact that he is a ksatriya. He belongs to a social class that normally does exercise rule, but he hasn't really got the means to exercise rule or to rise to a position of authority. But he has got the ambition of doing so. This is a source of downfall.

Kulananda: Like a long line of American presidents.

S: Yes. So it is connected with the previous verse where other people raised to a position of power someone who is not able to exercise that power. Here he wishes to gain that power, even though he doesn't really have the means to gain it.

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Sumitra: But that doesn't necessarily imply that he wouldn't be able to exercise it if he had it. He could be quite capable.

Prajnananda: But he hasn't got the means.

S: In a way, if one takes it quite literally, it means that he doesn't recognize his own limitations. He doesn't see that even though in a sense he is qualified, he hasn't got the means to attain power. Nonetheless, he's very ambitious, as it says here: 'he is of great craving.' The word used is tanha. This suggest almost automatically something unskilful. He craves power even though he hasn't the means to attain power. If he craves power even if he has the means to attain it: well, it isn't altogether a skilful situation. But if he craves power and doesn't have the means to attain it, it's as though that's even more unskilful, because he's just frustrating himself. He wants to gain power but hasn't got the means to gain power. He craves power, but it's not likely that he'll possess it. But he won't recognize that fact. He goes on craving for it.

So what sort of psychological situation is this? When you're not recognizing your own limitations in this way? You're hankering after something, in this case power, rulership, which you ought to be able to see that you are not in a position to attain anyway. So why does one involve oneself in this sort of situation?

Dharmananda: You're trying to bolster your own sense of inadequacy.

S: Yes, perhaps.

Sumitra: Can you clarify 'of slender means'?

S: That is not really very clear. 'Means': As the word occurred in the previous verse it was 'amenities', 'possessions'. But that would imply, in that Indian context, that he didn't have the means to attain to kingship. He didn't have enough money to bribe people, or to influence people or to command people's respect.

Sumitra: So it doesn't imply anything about his own personal capabilities?

S: That is not actually stated, no.

Mike Howes: Could it actually be translated as that? Could it include that meaning of 'means' in terms of capacity?

S: If one takes the word fairly literally, then no. It doesn't actually say that he's not qualified to rule. That may be considered to be implied, but it isn't actually stated.

Dharmananda: It seems to imply that since power is what he's after and he hasn't got these means in the first place, that [143] he is probably going to resort to quite ruthless, unskilful means if he does actually set about trying to achieve it.

S: You could look at it in another way again in the Indian context. It is quite natural for one born of a ksatriya family to exercise power or rule. It's only natural he should expect to exercise it if he's born into that sort of family. It's in a sense almost his duty to exercise it. But supposing he hasn't got the means to gain that power; then he shouldn't insist upon his right to it. Do you see what I mean? He should just forget about it and recognize that he's not in a position to gain power, even though perhaps he's qualified, at least by birth, to exercise it. You are not recognizing the limitations of the situation. You are insisting too much upon your own rights in the abstract almost. In the Indian context the word 'right' wouldn't be used; this is my interpretation. It's not enough that you are a ksatriya and ksatriyas normally exercise rule. That's not enough. You must also have the means to actually exercise it, and if you don't have that well, there's no use allowing yourself to become consumed by ambition. It is self-frustrating.

Kulananda: Or else, even worse, you might end up following any form of unskilful behaviour in order to achieve your ends, such as Napoleon, for example.

S: Yes, right. Or you might embark upon a course that leads in the end to your own destruction.

Kulananda: Like Macbeth.

Dharmananda: Is it possible that in the social structure that is referred to here for him to take a more positive course and decide to, say, well, do public service, become a renowned person, and by virtue of that to be admitted gradually up the [hierarchy]?

S: One could say that. Or one could look at it from a slightly different point of view and say that he's thinking that he should exercise rule because he's been born in a ksatriya family; to that extent he's confining himself within the limits of the caste structure. Why should he think that just because he's been born in a ksatriya family he's got to exercise rule? That is the usual social assumption, or the assumption of Indian society at that time: only a ksatriya can rule; therefore, if you are a ksatriya, you ought to be able to rule. Maybe you ought to transcend that situation altogether.

Dharmananda: So he's a bit like the young son in a family; he's jealous of his father.

S: He's a bit obstinate. He's insisting on his rights, so to speak. 'Well, here am I; I'm born into a ksatriya family; I want to exercise kingship.' He doesn't give sufficient realistic recognition to the fact that he hasn't got the means [144] to attain it. He's being a bit obstinate, as it were.

To change the context completely, it's like someone who completes his education, gets a degree, gets a qualification, and can't find a job, but won't accept the fact. He thinks: 'Well, I've got the qualification, I ought to have the job.' He's overlooking the fact that that just isn't possible in the existing setup. For instance, maybe he's been trained, maybe he's qualified, in agriculture. He says: 'I'm qualified in agriculture; I've got that certificate. I'm going to work in agriculture or else I'm not going to work in anything.' Well, it's that sort of obstinacy. He hasn't got the means to get that sort of job. He's got the technical qualification, but he hasn't got the means in the sense that the overall situation does not permit him actually to get that particular job. So there's no point in him insisting upon being an agriculturalist if there are no vacancies for agriculturalists. Even though you are qualified as an agriculturalist you'd better turn your thoughts to something else. But if you refuse to do that it can only be out of a sort of obstinacy.

Mike Howes: Trying to relate this situation to the Friends - and I know I might come a little unstuck here, but I'll try - I'm thinking not of the individual here but the Movement. We try and do things which sometimes as a Movement we don't have the means for. I'm thinking of certain Right Livelihoods. For instance, there is a need to sell over at our place [Windhorse Trading], and I observe too many people who aren't that good. So are we actually creating a bad situation, potentially, or trying to do things we haven't got the means for? I don't want to generalize totally, but is there any parallel here?

S: Well, if one hasn't got the means to do something and you try to do it, because you refuse to recognize you haven't got the means to do it, in certain situations that is very foolish; in certain other situations it might be heroic, depending on the situation. Yes, sometimes, yes, maybe it seems common sense: you just haven't got the means to do it as when we took on Sukhavati. But actually of course we did it, although in a sense we didn't have the means to do it. It was done against all the calculations of at least some people. So it's difficult sometimes to actually be sure, even though the principle is clear enough. It's not always possible to be sure exactly how to apply that.

Sumitra: Well, that comes down to the motive from which you are acting presumably. But this is a craving rather than acting from a positive mental state.

S: Yes. Your craving in this case for rulership is so strong that it blinds you to the fact that you haven't got the means to attain what you are craving for. You're blinded by ambition. (Pause)

On the other hand, Napoleon did become Emperor of France, even though it must have seemed very unlikely at the beginning. So the question is: Has one judged the situation correctly in saying that someone didn't have the means? Or in [145] saying that someone did have the means. Sometimes it seems that someone has the means or that you have the means, but you don't succeed in attaining your goal nonetheless. Sometimes it may seem that you don't have the means, but nonetheless you manage to achieve your goal. So it's not always easy to know whether the means are actually there or not.

Mike Howes: I can certainly think of a number of situations when I was in office-type work where people actually caused themselves considerable unhappiness or downfall by just wanting to be one step further when they had objectively no chance whatsoever and somehow the system made their expectations think they could get there. It's like these princes whose

expectations are that they should be there.

S: Like the graduate expecting he's going to walk into a really good job.

Sumitra: I can relate to that very strongly with the work situation, 'cause in both the working situations I was in before I became involved with the Friends there was always that feeling you'd like to be one step ahead.

S: Well, that's all right in a sense. But what is envisaged here is a situation in which you have a strong craving to get ahead, as it were, but you just haven't the means to do that. You really haven't objectively got the means to do it, but nonetheless you will not give up your ambition. That's where the obstinacy comes in. Even though you haven't got the means of realizing your ambition you refuse to recognize that fact. You refuse to recognize what the situation is. So you go on just battering your head against the wall.

Mike Howes: It's very clearly self-destructive, very clearly downfall.

S: Anyway, that's it I think, except for a concluding verse which winds things up. In Hare's translation that goes: 'These sufferings in the world the wise discern, and blest with vision Ariyan, they seek the world of bliss.' Or, Chalmers: 'The noble sage, whose penetrating eye these failures scans, has won the realms of bliss.' Or, Saddhatissa: 'Reflecting thoroughly on these causes of downfall in the world, the wise one, endowed with insight, enjoys bliss in a happy state.' The word for 'the wise one' is pandita, which doesn't mean 'a learned man' in Pali. It means 'the wise man'.

Chris Harper: The man of insight?

S: Well, no; it's 'wise' in a more general sense.

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Cassette Eight, Side Two

[146]
S: 'The wise man who is perfectly endowed with sight or vision, he understands these sources of downfall, and in this way he attains to the world of happiness.' The word is sivan. It's not the usual word for 'happiness'. The usual word for happiness is sukham. It's the same word you get for the Hindu deity: Siva, the beneficent one, the happy one. This is the beneficent state of happiness.

So if one understands, if one sees, these sources of downfall and if one avoids them, well, such a wise person eventually attains to a happy world. In a way it's very vague. It's left general because the context is perhaps lay rather than monastic. So it doesn't speak specifically in terms of nirvana though sivan is a synonym for nirvana. So it could be taken in that sense too: that one who understands these sources of downfall and therefore, by implication, who avoids them, attains to the happiness of nirvana. So there's a reminder of the positive aspect right at the end.

Let me look up this word samavekkhiya. (Pause) It means 'having considered'; 'Having

considered these sources of downfall'. So that, by implication, represents all the mangalas, the mangalas represent the opposite series, a process of ascent rather than a process of decline.

In some ways it's strange that this little sutta composed or pronounced all these centuries ago, which is quite simple and straightforward, is still quite applicable to human life, quite relevant to human life, even today. Anyway, I think as soon as I can I'll sort out a translation of the verses that we have done today and yesterday and maybe put it in circulation, maybe put it in Shabda. There are quite a few points that could be gone into further or more deeply, but perhaps it isn't necessary to be absolutely exhaustive in every case. It'll leave some new material for you to dig out when perhaps you take your own study groups on this particular sutta. But certain possible areas of discussion or consideration in depth have certainly been indicated.

Sumitra: There was just one thing coming back to the beginning that this sutta was given to a young deva.

S: A god, a divinity.

Sumitra: Was it that, did he ask for advice that would be suitable for a layman?

S: No, he just asks the Buddha 'About man's suffering' - or 'decline' - 'we question Gotama: we ask the Master now the source of suffering', 'the source of decline.' Well, you could ask the question: Why does the devata want to know that? Does it really concern him? He's not a human being, he's a devata. But a devata could be interested because it is said that - there are some traditions on this point - that when human beings follow the path of righteousness, follow the path of the Dhamma, if they don't attain nirvana in their lifetime, after death they are born into a happy heavenly world among the devas. The numbers of the devas thereby are increased and [147] when the numbers of the devas are increased they are more likely to win a victory over the asuras! So the devatas have a personal, almost a vested, interest in human beings following the path of righteousness; and therefore they are quite interested in this. (Laughter) This is perhaps mythological, but maybe it makes a sort of sense.

Sumitra: Because I was just wondering whether you might say that the six realms being manifested in the world - it was a householder who came to the Buddha who was already practising morality to the extent that he had attained to that deva-like state.

S: I think that would be highly interpretative. The text seems to mean a real deva.

On the other hand, several suttas, like this one and the Mangala Sutta, have this little sort of introduction or prefix to them. You could say that maybe these teachings were circulated in this particular form in the early Buddhist community. They were generally attributed to the Buddha but they weren't regarded as being teachings addressed to any particular person, there was no tradition of that. So they came to be regarded as teachings which the Buddha had addressed to devatas, and therefore this sort of common introduction was prefixed to their suttas. You could from the more rationalist point of view look at it like that because they seem to be quite down-to-earth teachings, even though supposedly addressed to a devata.

Also they are in verse like the teachings of the Mangala Sutta. That might have some bearing on the subject. Because one doesn't usually speak in verse maybe the odd couplet under the

force of inspiration, but it's highly unlikely that the Buddha should have delivered discourses, even quite short, in beautiful Pali verses. So where did these verses come from? Perhaps the Buddha did compose them, but he could hardly have composed them on the spot when actually asked by a human being. Perhaps he composed them at night when he was just thinking to himself, when a sort of interior dialogue was going on. That is how poets do compose poems. Perhaps this could be regarded in that sort of way.

Kulananda: I suppose it is likely that the Buddha would have taught in that way as an aid to memory on occasions.

S: Yes, that is quite feasible. But that would still mean that he'd have to work out the verses quietly on his own perhaps during the night. Perhaps the deva represents a sort of force of poetic inspiration; one could even look at it like that. The Buddha thinks to himself: 'Well, these people that I am in contact with and who come to see me - what are the sources of downfall for them? What makes them decline?' He asks himself that question, and then the answers come from within himself; and he put these various sources of downfall into verses. It then comes to be said that a deva in the night asks him what were the sources of downfall and this is what he said in reply. One could again look at it like that.

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Mike Howes: It seems, for me at least, to be quite helpful to hear references to devas and just let them go in and not think about them, and think about the substance. And maybe that's a sort of emotional balance - the deva idea - to cope with some of the intellectual stuff.

S: Yes, one can keep an open mind about devas. There might be devas and asuras and gandharvas and kinnaras and yakkhas and nagas! Perhaps it isn't just a question of human beings and animals.

All right, let's leave it there then, shall we? How many hours was that altogether?

Prajnananda: Well, it's been about two to two and a half hours each time. That's just under ten hours I should think.

S: Yes. About ten hours: that's just under an hour to each verse. So we've probably said quite a lot I don't just mean in terms of words but in terms of meaning.

Mike Howes: Perhaps this could be used in puja readings.

S: Yes, especially if I can sort out a better translation. Chalmers is very good from a purely literary point of view, very good indeed, but it isn't completely accurate. Hare is reasonably accurate. Saddhatissa is sometimes very accurate, but not always.

Kulananda: He seems to impose a bit of censoring: he altered that bit about breasts, which I found quite amusing.

S: Ah yes, he paraphrased.

Mike Howes: Hare seems to have a certain charm about it.

S: Yes, intelligible. Chalmers, though very literary, isn't always immediately intelligible. In a way, he's too literary. Hare's more simple and direct, like the actual original. The original is very simple and direct, on the whole. (Pause)

Kulananda: Thank you very much Bhante. [Sounds of agreement)

S: It would take a lot of time to go through the whole Pali Tipitaka, wouldn't it? (Laughter) I'll just have to hand it over as a legacy to the rest of you, to go through the remainder. I think I've shown you how. I've done one or two dozen suttas; I'll leave the other four or five thousand to yourselves to do in due course!

Kulananda: You're not going to delegate them particularly?

S: That's an idea! (Laughter) I'll give you the Jataka book!

End of Cassette Eight, Side Two

END OF SEMINAR

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira December 1998