

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

The Ratana Sutta Seminar

Held at Padmaloka, May 1980.

Taken from Saddhatissa and an unidentified translation of the Sutta Nipata. Also used: Lord Chalmers (trs) Buddha's Teachings, being the Sutta Nipata or Discourse Collection (Harvard U.P., Cambridge, Mass., 1932)

Those present: Venerable Sangharakshita, Lokamitra, Dharmamati, Viramati, Andy Friends, Alan Turner, Buddhadasa, Bernie Tisch, Darren DeWitt.[1]

Ratana Sutta

S: All right, we're going to be going through the Ratana Sutta which is part of the Sutta Nipata. It is the first sutta in the second book, which is called the Culavagga: the short or the little book. I think most of you know that the Sutta Nipata contains some of the most ancient material, in the whole of the Pali Canon. For instance there is the Parayanavagga and the Atthakavagga mainly. So the Ratana Sutta can be regarded as quite ancient, in as much as it appears in the Sutta Nipata at all. But it must be said, it is not one of the most ancient parts of the Sutta Nipata. But in as much as it is still part of the Sutta Nipata, it is still quite ancient. It is in, what some scholars have called, "Ballad" form - everybody knows, I think, that the Buddha didn't actually write anything; the teachings were oral, were verbal. And very often people took the spirit of what the Buddha said, the monks took the spirit of what the Buddha said, and they put it into their own words - they even versified it, they even made up 'ballads', so to speak, which they could chant as they went from place to place for the instruction of the people. So we can probably conclude that the Ratana Sutta is a work of this kind. It was put together either by the Buddha's own personal disciples or their disciples, or at the latest by their disciples in this sort of, versified form and it certainly does reflect the Buddha's own teachings. It reflects them in a fairly developed form as we shall see. We're going to go through the text verse by verse, line by line, in fact word by word; as we usually do. And I should perhaps mention that we are going through this text by, so to speak, special request of Lokamitra, because this is a very popular text in the Buddhist East. In Theravada countries, and in those areas which are influenced by the Theravada tradition, this is one of the three most popular suttas for recitation; not only for recitation but also for exposition and commentating upon. The other two are of course the Mangala Sutta, the sutta of blessings or auspicious signs and the Karaniya Metta Sutta, the sutta on the development of loving kindness. So Lokamitra thought that if he were equipped with a full exposition of these three suttas, then he could have quite a bit of material to spread far and wide in India, and in all his study groups, a certain uniformity of teaching would be introduced. In any case, people there know the Ratana Sutta, as they know the Mangala Sutta and Karaniya Metta Sutta. They have heard it, recited it often, read it in translation, some of them, some of our Buddhist friends there, they know it in Pali, they can recite it in Pali, even understand it in Pali. So quite a lot of them would like to be able to understand it more fully and more deeply. We also would like to do this, so we are going to go through this in these two days and four sessions. I hope we can really, not only, go through it, but do some justice to it. It's a little longer than the Mangala and Karaniya Metta Suttas but we'll see what we can do. So let's go straight into it we'll do what we usually do, get somebody to read the first verse, and just look at it for as long as is necessary.

"Whatever beings are assembled here, whether terrestrial Or celestial, let such beings be [2] happy; let them moreover, attentively listen to what is said."

S: That is Saddhatissa's translation. I'll read another translation just to give you some idea of how they can vary. As you'll see, they are substantially the same. "May denizens of earth and sky assembled here, may beings all rejoice and harken unto me" that's Chalmers. And then there's Hare's "Spirits of Earth and Sky, here gathered round; Ye spirits all, be ye with good will filled. And heed ye now and harken to the word." So they are all pretty much the same, aren't they. So one gets really three points made. What are these three points? Well firstly

there is the address to all beings. Whoever compiled, or whoever composed this sutta, is addressing all beings, especially beings of the earth and of the sky. "bhummāni va yaṇi va antalikkhe," of the earth, and the space in between, that is to say the sky, the heavens.

: That's "antalikkhe"?

S: Yes. So that's the first point. who is addressed? everybody. The compiler or composer is calling upon them to listen - that's the second point. Also calling upon them to, ah, one version says rejoice although it's not in the other versions, and one version speaks of listening attentively. Ah yes, he calls upon them to be happy, yes be Suman happy rather than rejoice. a of happy mind - "Su" is good or happy, "mana" is mind - the name Sumana. The compiler or composer of the sutta is saying to everybody - may you be happy minded. In my own translation I say "May they be happy -minded, everyone". "Whatever beings are assembled here creatures of earth or spirits of the sky, May they be happy (that is quite literal translation) everyone. And pay good heed to what is said to them. So there are these three points; first of all, all beings are being addressed. Beings of Earth and the Sky. They are asked to be happy minded, which is an expression of good will towards them, and they are asked to listen. So there are these three points which one has to go into a little bit first. So first of all - All beings. So what does this suggest? That at the very beginning of the sutta, the compiler addresses or invokes all the beings of heaven and earth - so what does this suggest, what does that convey?

:Well, a Universality of...

S: Sort of Universality, yes? The text doesn't go into any detail, it doesn't say exactly who are the beings of the earth and the sky, so who do you think are meant by the "beings of the earth"

: (Unclear)

S: Sentient beings living upon the face of the earth but especially human beings and what do you think about the celestial beings?

: Gods.

S: Gods. So how literally is one to take that? What do you think it really means? What is a God according to Buddhism?

It seems to be suggested that they've got a sort of independent existence to mankind. [3]

S: Yes. This is the impression that one gets from Buddhist texts. That sentient existence isn't confined to what we can see with our ordinary eyes in the form of human beings, animals and so on. Buddhist texts do present a whole range of beings called devas inhabiting other worlds. One may or may not accept that. Whether one accepts it or not, the basic point remains, that the Buddha's teaching is addressed to all living beings. if there are such beings as devas, it is said quite literally that the Buddha's teaching is addressed to them Sometime ago in Christian theological circles, a question arose "whether the saving death of Christ applied to any beings that might exist on other planets or in other worlds." that was in the days of the landing of the first man on the moon. Do you remember? Some of you may remember it. This rather excited the interest of some, Christian theologians, because, usually it had been thought, that Christ's saving, or sacrificial death, saved beings on the earth, but after all Christian theologians hadn't bothered about beings in other worlds because, traditionally Christianity doesn't have any such conception. Its attention is centred entirely upon this earth. God created the Earth, the garden of Eden, he put Adam and Eve there, there's not a word said about any other world or any other earth or planet,. There are of course the angels, but they are completely different - they are in heaven, whatever that may mean. They are not distributed over other planets. So this was quite a question; and opinion was divided. Some felt that the atoning death of Christ was available or the redemption of Christ was available only for those born on the earth. Others thought it could perhaps be extended to beings in other worlds, even though of course,

not a word was said about that in Christian scriptures. But in the case of Buddhism there is no doubt about this at all. You may or may not accept the existence of devas as described in the Buddhist Scriptures but there's no doubt that if there are any such beings, or if there are any beings in distant worlds, in other universes, who are sentient and conscious then the Buddha's teaching is applicable to them as well. It is as much for them as it is for human beings, because it is a universal teaching. And this point is made very strongly in Buddhism. I mean, the Buddha himself sent out his first enlightened disciples to teach the Dharma, to make clear the Dharma for the good and the welfare of many beings. It's not limited to any particular section of people. It's not even limited to any particular form of life.

: Does this include Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or are they distinct from sentient beings?

S: Well, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are sentient beings. They are enlightened sentient beings. As distinct from the majority who are unenlightened sentient beings. And the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the teachers of the Dharma, the primary teachers of the Dharma. And that Dharma which they teach is directed towards all unenlightened beings, all un-aryas without any exception at all. So because it's directed towards all living beings, without exception; directed by the enlightened towards the unenlightened, without exception, for that reason it is a universal teaching.

: Also, this is sort of addressed from all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to...[4]

S: One could look at it like that. in as much as this is a text from the Pali scriptures - and these are centred upon Sakyamuni, Gotama the Buddha the historical Buddha). In this context there is no reference to Bodhisattvas., You know, the idea of Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana sense developed later on but the principle is the same, that the Buddha's teaching whether it comes through a historical Buddha, whether it comes through an Archetypal Bodhisattva, or whether it comes through one of the Transcendental Buddhas, a symbolical sort of form - that teaching is directed towards all, that teaching is meant for all, without any reservation, according to their particular capacity, and their ability to practise it. So this is the first point which seems to be made here, indirectly; that the teaching is meant for all, is addressed to all. You could say, in as much as it's the Ratana Sutta, it suggests the three jewels are for all; the three jewels are of interest and value to all. The three jewels are the objects of refuge for all sentient beings, did they but know it. At least they are available. But one can look at it another way also. One has got a reference to the beings of the earth, and also the sky, the heavens, the inter space. So one could also look at that in a Jungian terms. What do you think I mean by that? one has got the earth, the depths; and one has got the sky, the heights. So one is appealing, as it were, to the heights and the depths to listen. The beings of the heights, the beings of the depths. So what do you think that suggests, what does that convey?

'The heights and depths of one's own consciousness.

S: Yes. The appeal that is being made is not just to the surface consciousness, it's also to the depths, it's also to the heights. It's to everything within one. The best, and even in a sense the worst. All parts of you have got to be involved as it were, the depths and the heights. I gave a lecture many years ago, which is on tape probably, on "Heights and Depths in Spiritual Experience" or something like that. Anybody remember hearing that?

I do

S: May be "Heights and Depths of Spiritual Life"; something like That.

(Unclear)

S: And also in the case of the gods, I mean, these also can be regarded, not as beings existing outside of oneself, but as constellations of spiritual energies, of a very refined nature, existing within oneself, rather like Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other figures that one encounters within the context of the Bardo state. So one could say that the approach, and the appeal is universal

both objectively and subjectively. Objectively the appeal is made to all living beings, all beings in the universe, the teaching is intended for all, the three jewels are relevant to all. And subjectively, the appeal is to every part of you; the heights of your nature, the depths of your nature. All of them, sooner or later should be involved. So therefore it is said "Whatever beings are assembled here, creatures of earth, or spirits of the sky" and then, "may they be happy minded" or "may [5] they rejoice." So the attitude towards them on the part of the person proclaiming the teaching is a thoroughly positive one. That is also very important obviously. One who represents the Dharma, one who represents the Three Jewels must have this completely positive attitude first of all towards all living beings - that goes without saying, that does not require any explanation - but also towards the entire content of his own experience, both the heights and the depths. You see what I mean? Because every aspect of one's experience has to be pulled in, integrated. Of course this does not apply to the unskillful things as unskillful but the energy which is embodied in the unskillful actions or mental states, that energy is not to be repudiated it's only the unskillful form that it has taken the energy itself is to be accepted and which is to be repudiated,

integrated.

What do you mean by repudiated?

S: Well, we find very often that people dislike parts of themselves and they see these sort of parts, these aspects as split off from themselves so they disown them, they don't want to recognize them as theirs. But not only with regard to their form so to speak but with regard to their energy content, so even though you repudiated, disown it, it retains a sort of life of its own split off and apart from your total psychic life. You see what I mean? So you aren't integrated, you are still disintegrated. So what you have to do is to see that, yes that represents something unskillful, some unskillful action, some unskillful thought, so you dissolve the unskillfulness but you retain the energy. What we usually do is we disown the unskillfulness but we disown the energy too. So that means that a part of oneself is split off from the whole, we aren't integrated. So it's important to dissolve the unskillfulness but retain the energy, not repudiate the energy. (Pause.) There is another secondary point here which I didn't include in the ..., three main points and that is 'assembled' "Yanidha bhutani samaqatani", that is, to say 'Whatever beings are assembled here, come together, convened even. So the enunciator of the sutta not only envisages all living beings as harkening to the words of the sutta, harkening to the Buddha's teaching. He actually envisages them, he almost imagines them as all come together. There is a sort of tradition if you like with regard to the Buddha himself that when the Buddha started teaching, teaching the Dharma on any occasion, there would be a vast gathering not only of human beings but even of gods of various kinds. So what does this represent? Sometimes it is set forth in the Mahayana sutras very very fully. You've got in the assembly bhiksus, bhiksunis, upasakas, upasikas, kings, princes, heretical teachers, wealthy merchants and then they enumerate all the different kinds of gods and strange non-human creatures, they're all hovering around, they all gathered together, they're all there, they're all listening. So what does this represent? whether one takes it literally, whether one doesn't - so what does this represent?

: Completely focused attention.

S: Completely focused attention, yes, but more than that. It represents the integrating power of the Dharma. The Dharma brings everything together, the Dharma attracts everything but not just in a sort of disorganized or chaotic way. It's rather like what Subhuti was referring to last night about the patterns made by the... - what [6] is it, what is the technical ... ?

: ... a magnet

S: Right, yes. It is not just a force which is attracting, at the same time that the force is attracting all these different elements, it is also so to speak imposing a pattern upon them. So the Dharma - the Dharma, the Buddha, the Sangha - are these sort of attractive forces which attract all living beings and organizes them into an harmonious assembly, into a cosmos so to

speak, a spiritual cosmos, a spiritual world or a pure land. So all these sort of suggestions are there too. So I 'Whatever beings are assembled here, Creatures of earth or spirits of, the sky, May they be happy, every one, And pay good heed to what is said to them.' So that last line implies (?) us that third point: listen, listen attentively', I sunantu bhasitam', harken to what I said. This of course introduces a very important point upon which we touched often enough before which is of course the importance of receptivity. There is no need to say very much about that because so much has been said before. So you see, perhaps we can expand our three points to four. First of all the teaching is addressed to everybody, All living beings are addressed, objectively all living beings in the world, in the universe, subjectively all the living beings of one's own mind so to speak, And the attitude of the person inculcating the teaching is positive, he wishes them all well, he wishes that they may be happy minded and he asks them to listen, he asks them to be receptive. And when they are gathered in that way, they form the fourth point: an harmonious assemblage, brought together, drawn together by the attractive force of the Dharma, or rather the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. All this one has got by indication at least in this first verse, All these points. (Pause.) Is that clear, or any further point arises after that?

: It occurs to me, Bhante, that wishing all beings or such beings, happiness just thinking in terms that when you're communicating well, it's with the medium of metta, so that's what's perhaps is being suggested here U's

S: Yes. Because it's as though whoever is transmitting this teaching, whether a Buddha's disciple or a disciple of a disciple, he is sort of invoking all living beings, he is as it were calling out to them, he's addressing them, yes he is as it were entering into communication with them and that is a positive communication on his side involving metta and good will, a desire for their happiness and on their side involving receptivity as indicated here by this word 'listen, listens r 'heed', this is the literal meaning. So in the terms of the main translation that we are using, 'Whatever beings are assembled here, whether terrestrial or celestial, all such beings be happy, let them moreover attentively listen to what is said'. (Pause.) Any further points?

: one minor point had sort of occurred to me when you were talking about 'listening', is that it was just about the power of the spoken word - that if you say in a group, if you have just someone attention, then you've got an audience, but say in a meditation practise when you could almost invoke the I Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and if it's a good meditation, you've just got this feeling that they are there, they're all about, you summon them. [7]

S: Yes, that is quite strange in a way because if you speak, well it's as though there must be someone there to listen. By the act of speaking you create your audience. In a way you don't have to wait for the audience to be there and then you start speaking, you start speaking and gradually the audience assembles. (Laughter.) Rather like to use a very crude comparison, the speakers at Hyde Park corner. You just start speaking, and people will gather. The Buddhas start teaching and all the devas in the sky not to speak of human beings. Of course in the Pali scriptures which reflect a more historical version of the Dharma, you might in fact find that the Buddha succeeds in attracting just two or three people. But the principle nonetheless holds good. In the Mahayana sutras as I mentioned the full assembly is described because the Mahayana sutras are not just concerned with the ordinary everyday historical world but with the ideal world and in the ideal world everybody listens to the Buddha. But it's not always the case in the actual world but the principle still holds good, that the Dharma has this tremendous attractive force but fortunately or unfortunately people can resist it. In a way, fortunately, because if they couldn't resist it they wouldn't be able also to open themselves to it. They have the free will so to speak to do either. Anyway, let's go on to the next verse.

"Therefore, O beings, do you all pay attention: diffuse loving kindness towards mankind who day and night bring offerings to you. Protect them, therefore, with earnestness."

So Chalmers (?) translation says:

"List, beings all, and show
goodwill to men, who bring
oblations night and day.
So shield mankind from harm."

And Hare says:

"Come then ye spirits all, attend now!
Work amity on all the race of men
Who here day in day out bring offerings:
Come then, and ward ye them now zealously!"

And what do I say?

"Hence, all ye spirits, hear attentively.
Look lovingly upon the race of men,
And since they bring thee offerings day and night,
Keep watch and ward about them heedfully."

What are we to make of this? This verse evidently harkens back to a quite sort of primitive state of affairs, a state of affairs in which human beings make offerings of various kind to the spirits of the earth and of the sky. This is what comes in here, is sort of fitted in here. So how is one to look at that? (Pause.) I think for us it's not easy to feel or imagine what is meant here. Because we've after all been conditioned by our Christian upbringing, Christian heritage, we know this very well. But in more ancient times, man seemed to have a very strong feeling for nature and for the things of nature, a feeling which still exists in the many so-called 'pagans countries. I include India, because India on a certain level is very [8] pagan. The Indians if you give them half a chance to worship anything, they almost go to extremes. I remember my teacher, Bhikkhu. Jaggariskasa, telling me, that when he was a boy in a village in a remote part of Bihar, they were building a new road and he said as they were building the road, of course they were putting up milestones along the road. And he said one morning he happened to see one woman going from the village to the mile-post which had been set up just near this village by the side of this road and she took along a little tray with some vermilion and a few flowers and things, and she anointed the milestone with this vermilion paste and stuck a few sticks of incense in the ground in front of it and then saluted. She thought it was some new kind of devil a new kind of god, a new kind of secret stoner something like that. The Indian on a certain level, they just worship anything. But if you think upon it, if you reflect on it, in a way it does seem in a sense quite healthy. May be in the case of these village women, then it becomes a bit mechanical and as we would say superstitious in inverted commas but it's in a way the animistic outlook. You feel everything is alive, all these forces, all these forms which are non human and you feel a definite contact with them, you feel a sort of rapport with them, and you want to propitiate them, you want to be on friendly terms with them, you want to be on good terms with them. So this is what it really suggests, this is what the verse is really getting at in terms of so to speak primitive animism. I think we must be careful not to look down upon animism. I remember saying quite a few years ago to someone while I was in Kalimpong, it's much better to think that everything is alive rather than everything is dead. Because mechanistic materialism suggests that everything is just dead, it isn't really alive. So rather than look everything as dead, it's much better to look at everything as alive. The trees are alive, the stones are alive and streams are alive, clouds are alive. I mean they are all alive even if you do sort of personify them in a rather literal kind of way, even childish sort of way, never mind that's better than seeing everything as dead. A child experiences everything as alive, a child doesn't make all that difference between a human being and a tree, if it runs into a tree and hurts itself it will sort of kick the tree and scold it for getting in the way, the child sees nothing absurd in that. So primitive man seems to have had, and still retains to some extent:, this sense of everything being alive. Some writers about Buddhism, some Western scholars, when they come to write about Buddhism in Ceylon or Burma or Thailand or other countries too, they're rather disturb to find, as they see it, that the pure philosophical and ethical teaching of Buddhism has

become corrupted by being mixed with a lot of animism and spirit worship. But I don't think we should really see it like that because at a certain level one is a part of nature, one feels around oneself all sorts of natural forces, natural energies. And one cannot help feeling them as alive, may be experiencing them even so to speak in the form of gods, spirits of the earth and the sky and feeling them and experiencing them in that way, you would want to keep up a sort of healthy, happy positive relationship with them. You would want to propitiate them, make offerings to them which means simply being on friendly terms with them. You give them offerings, they in return protect you, you see what I mean? So it's as though in this [9] particular verse, the compiler of the sutta is taking up this old, archaic, pagan, primitive way of looking at things, animistic way of looking at things, and is giving it a sort of wider significance. He is saying as it were 'be on friendly terms with the universe, if you feel friendly with the universe, the universe will feel friendly towards you'. In other words, it's the opposite of the state of paranoia. In the state of paranoia, you don't feel friendly towards the universe and you experience the universe as very hostile and threatening. But here, it's as though the compiler of the sutta is saying, just feel friendly towards the universe, adopt a friendly attitude towards the universe, towards the whole of nature, towards all living things, to the spirits so to speak that are in living things, spirits of earth and sky and the trees, clouds, stones, etc., etc. and you yourself will feel, so to speak, better then. If you have this friendly and kindly attitude towards them, you will feel that they have a friendly and kindly attitude towards you. Do you see that the compiler of the sutta seems to be getting at?

: I feel he is trying to raise the level of consciousness and the positivity of the listener like the high consciousness, or lower consciousness or enlightened or unenlightened and try to bring it up to a higher level like he is even reminding the audience or beings in the first line, Therefore O beings do you all pay attention, they've got to be reminded. (Bhante sort of laughs!)

S: If you take this verse literally, it's also a bit of bargainingly - struck "Therefore, O beings, do you all pay attention: diffuse loving-kindness towards mankind who day and night bring offerings to you. Protect them therefore, with earnestness." It's as though, gods and men have struck a bargain, the men have agreed to worship the gods and provide them with ovations, the gods have agreed to protect human beings in return for those offerings. Well, you still get traces of this in the Old Testament in Christian teaching, you do your bit by God and He will do his bit by you. I remember some years ago hearing a woman remark very bitterly, she said 'All these years we worshipped God and now look, He's done this to us! as though He'd not kept his side of the bargain. So this is the framework if you take it literally but obviously the context being what it is, one shouldn't. It's just this reciprocity of good offices, reciprocity of kindly and friendly dealings between you and the rest of the universe.

___: Is it like a bond between...

___: It's a bit like sort of accruing good merit.

S: Yes, it involves that surely. But the basic thing is to set up this relationship of good will between you and the rest of the universe. It's probably difficult to feel goodwill and kindness or love towards something you think of as impersonal. I think before you can feel positive emotion, before you can feel love towards something, you have to invest it with certain personal qualities. Do you see what I mean? You almost have to almost personalize it. I mean some people (I am not so sure about this) it seems: love their motor car, their motor bike with almost human love but it's as though they have to sort of personalize it, it can't be an 'it', it has to be a [10] 'he' or preferably a 'she' your boat, or your bike or your car and you start thinking of it as though it's got a sort of will of its own. So you say 'it's not going very well today, I don't think it's very happy. It may be it doesn't like the change of the weather; you do think of it in sort of personal terms. So this happens when you start developing positive feelings towards something, you see it as sort of personal. So to the extent that you feel positively towards life as a whole, all living things, you'll see those things as personal, you'll personalize them as even spirits, nature spirits, all the rest of it. So one is to take this not in a sort of scientific way, representing something that can be proved, but take it in a sort of

poetic way if you like.

___: I think that I feel it has quite a positive effect. even on cars or ... I think that they can prove that on trees, if you create positivity towards them, they respond.

___: I was just thinking of a review of the Great Heresy you did and you talked about the effects of positively giving plants attention. You develop a sort of soul in them. You'd look at that in terms of personalizing but it almost seems you don't get the reciprocal benefits until you create a personalised form. Gods can only help you if you believe in them and give them attention as Gods.

S: It's as though what you do when you give them attention as gods, as you put it, is that you set up a field within which there are poles and between those poles, there is a sort of tension, a sort of activity. Do you see what I mean? Just as before when Dipankara talked about just vocalizing something, invoking, calling out... when you speak out you sort of on the spot create your audience because you're one pole, the audience is the other pole. You bring one pole into existence, the other pole has to be there, you can't have one without the other, so it's the same way with the gods so to speak. If you posit yourself as the worshipper, you simultaneously posit the god, or whatever it is as the 'worshipped' and you set up that current of relationship between the two. So it's here too, if you see the universe in a certain way, you enter into a certain relationship with the universe or if you want to see the universe in a certain, or if you enter into a certain relationship with the universe, you have to see it in a certain way. if you want to love it, you have to see it as personal to some extent.

___: : It would seem another factor here is also of awareness. A lot of people just don't seem to be aware of nature, that it even exists. They don't see nature at all really. Something you see on a postcard. But to actually experience nature is a very different thing.

S: Well, this is, this relates to a whole aspect of modern life, doesn't it?. Urban industrial life, that we have very little direct physical contact with nature not as much as we had in previous generations, previous ages.

: Isn't there some sort of distinction between nature and concrete things, you know, man-made and tables and you say personalizing your motor cars etc., but isn't there some sort of difference between that and things like trees... [11]

S: Oh, yes. In a sense, everything is alive, even a motor bike is alive because it's made of steel, it's got pieces of rubber in it, you know, rubber is a vegetable product, or at least it used to be, they might have synthetic rubber now. So, I mean, ultimately everything is a part of nature even steel and wood, and rubber and so on. But it's much less highly organized. If you have a tree, or a flower, it's more highly organized, it's closer to human life, it's more easy therefore to see it and feel and experience it as 'so to speak, personal. But carrying this to its logical conclusion, then you can see even cement, as personal. But that's very difficult, isn't it? because it's not alive in, I was going to say 'same sort of way', but you could say to the same degree. So it's very difficult I think for you as a human being, the most highly evolved form of life on this planet anyway, to enter in a very close communication with something so relatively unevolved as a piece of cement. You might even find it quite difficult to manage it with an ordinary stone you found on the sea shore. You'll find it much more easy to enter into communication with a plant, and still more so with an animal.

___: What about another person?

S: Well, paradoxically another person is the most easy of all and also the most difficult of all. Because the plant or the stone is just there, it doesn't in a manner of speaking have a will of its own. In a sense it can't refuse to communicate but a human being can refuse to communicate and there is nothing you can do about it. Another person can block your communication because communication in a human sense is essentially a two way process. So the communication between two human beings is much more difficult just because there is

that greater element of choice, and either of you can just refuse to communicate at all, and the other person cannot compel the communication. Whereas, as far as we know, a flower is comparatively passive. The flower can hardly as it were make up its mind not to communicate but animals can. -You try and communicate with a cat who doesn't want to take any notice of you, you can't get through to the cat. A dog is much more easy.

___: But you can get through to them as much as you can through to a plant. You can still observe it.

S: Yes, you can communicate to the extent of observing, at least you are in contact with it.

___: Isn't it what you do with a plant say? just communicate by just observing it?

S: No, I think it's more than that, because as we usually use the word 'communication' - certainly we use among between human beings it's essentially a mutual thing. It's not that simply, if you're observing somebody and they don't know that you're observing them, there is no communication, we should use the term 'communication'. If they turn round - and it's not only a question of you observing them, but of them observing you, and them observing you observing them and you observing them observing you! - then you can speak of communication. In the case of the plant? you can observe the plant. But it was the belief of the person who wrote the book that Purna refers to, that the plant was also aware of you in a degree that the plant responded to you, and in fact was stimulated by your attention to grow. And I believe, as far as i remember that the author of this [12] book also had the belief or the hypothesis - whatever you like to call it - that the beautifully coloured flowers of plants were just so any demands for attention or represented a demand for attention on the part of the plant. Because the author seemed to think, why on earth should flowers go to all this trouble. Dear, look at the incredible trouble that they go to produce these beautiful coloured blossoms, all these wonderful shapes and sizes, is it just for the bees? Do you think that the bees really appreciate it It's to attract a certain kind of consciousness, a certain kind of attention and presumably, according to the author of this book, human. The flowers are asking for the attention of human beings because that's what helps them to grow. But perhaps this is a rather appealing sort of oddity I must say, when I read this book, I quite like the idea that all these blossoms represented the flowers sort of just clamouring for attention because your attention helps them to grow. But it may be a bit fanciful - it's difficult to say - but even if it is bit fanciful, it does embody an important truth that the communication between the more highly form of life and the less highly evolved form of life, does help the latter to grow. In fact, it's the most effective means of growing. If you, as a less evolved consciousness are in contact with a more evolved consciousness, especially say the consciousness of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, may be mediated through the scriptures, then that is the principal means of growth for you. So it would not be surprising if the principal means of growth say for dogs would be their contact with human beings, the principal means of growth for flowers would be their contact with human beings - I mean not flowers within the context of the wider evolutionary process because clearly they have got along somehow without any attention from human beings - but, you know, flowers as they are now the greater opportunities which perhaps they had before evolution in their own flowery way now that human beings are around. And the author of this book that Purna refers to seems to think that the flowers were really looking for this attention from human beings, just as dogs look for it from human beings just we look for it from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so on.

So this is a much more inspiring and perhaps also truer picture of the world picture of life that we are usually given. And it also can be quite inspiring for us if we think of this every time we pay attention to a flower and appreciate its blossoms and look kindly on it, it just helps it to grow. Not just as a flower, not just to fulfil its potential as a flower but actually to evolve into some higher form of life than a flower.

___: Would that include sort of cutting flowers and putting them in vases and things like that?

S: This is the sort of questions people sometimes ask. Sometimes people ask it in the form of

whether you harm the flower or hurt the flower by cutting it. I think it is agreed that you don't in as much as a flower doesn't have a centralized nervous system and you can just snip off a stalk with a flower on it, put it in water, it just goes on living. We couldn't snip off an arm or leg from an animal including a human being in that sort of way. Even if the flower suffers a little bit, even supposing, perhaps in the light of what the author of that book said, the fact that it was brought indoors, and put in a vase and was always under your eye, always looked at by you would more than compensate. But some people, very sensitive people, say [13] they can't bear to pick flowers; whether it's genuine sensitivity or whether it's sentimentality, it's rather difficult to say. Some people say they can't even walk on the grass, they don't like to hurt the grass. I have heard that one but again, it's difficult to say. But if it is genuine sensitivity, then obviously you have to follow your sensitivity. In the East, traditionally bhikkhus are not supposed to pluck flowers from trees, they don't have so many flowers in the sense that we have them, so usually for puja purposes they just gather up flowers which have just dropped from flowering trees every morning and they just offer those, but bhikkhus don't usually pick flowers. There is a dreadful story about a bhikkhu which is recorded - I don't know whether it is in the scriptures or a commentary, but it's always quoted.. A bhikkhu once went up to a lotus which was growing on the lake and he sniffed it, and at once a fairy popped out of it and said 'why are you stealing my scent?' So the bhikkhu was supposed to observe the rule of not taking anything which is not given, so the fairy or the devi, she maintained that she hasn't given him her assent and that he was taking it without permission, without asking and he was therefore breaking the precept. Some are as sensitive as that, they don't even like to pluck a flower, inhale the scent of the flower without permission. One of the things that Westerners do in the East which really shocks local Buddhists is they pick a flower to offer the Buddha and before offering it to the Buddha, they smell it and Eastern Buddhists think this dreadful, terrible. Shows a terrible lack of sensitivity and reverence and devotion because it's meant for the Buddha, not for you. It's almost like sort of cooking a meal for somebody, then you eat part of it and then you give him the rest. They sort of shake their heads and think 'how crude, how clumsy, insensitive these western people are. They actually sniff, they put their dirty noses on to the flower that they going to give the Buddha.' You see it's rather a different way of looking at things. Have you come across this in India?

:I have come across it with incense. I once took out some incense and sniffed it before putting it on the shrine and I was suitably chastised. (Laughter)

___: The Chinese seem to quite strictly follow that. remember it was a point of Dharmajyoti's in Christchurch for instance that you'd never sniff a flower that was being offered to the shrine. He would pull people off.

S: Well, the sense of that is evident that it is for the Buddha so to speak. It is not for you and the Buddha or the Buddha and you, it's just for the Buddha. So you don't appropriate any part of that offering for yourself, you don't feel that it is for you in any way, you feel it's entirely for the Buddha. So what have you to do with sniffing it and tasting or whatever, No! It's just like if you put a food offering on the altar so to speak for the Buddha, you don't taste it or munch half of it before you give it to the Buddha. So it's much the same, or should be the same with the flowers they think.

:Yes but by sniffing it, you appreciate it more and therefore give positivity and you are giving it as well...

S: It might be. if you genuinely feel that no harm. Because if you try their way of looking at things to the logical conclusion you [14] should not even look at the flower, not with appreciation. You see what I mean? Because would be just as much stealing as inhaling the scent of it. So you should keep your eyes closed, pluck the flower and just offer it. (Laughter.) But it goes back to your own feelings and sensitivity. If someone just grabs a flower, sniffs it and just shoves it on the shrine, well clearly they aren't being very sensitive. And if somebody just plucks a flower, refrains from sniffing it because it's meant for the Buddha and offers it un-sniffed, well clearly that person is a bit more sensitive. But supposing somebody was to think: well I am plucking this for the Buddha but the Buddha would not mind me smelling it

too. But suppose they genuinely felt like that, well you could hardly say that it was wrong. You see what I mean? You have to take the spirit of the thing and not turn it into a 'you should not smell flowers before offering to the Buddha', it is not like that otherwise you routinized the whole thing. That destroys the real spirit of it.

I also heard that you shouldn't blow candles out.

S: That's right, that's is regarded in the East as spitting upon them because there is a certain amount of saliva in the sort of spray in the breath. So, you know, to spit on something you are going to offer to the Buddha is regarded as disgraceful. So people always wave incense sticks if they want to extinguish the flame.. So it's as well to be aware of these things even if one doesn't necessarily strictly observe them - not do anything out of clumsiness or insensitivity. (Pause.) Anyway, these two verses are sort of introductory. So may be we'd better finish with them and come to the main part of the sutta.

. : Just one more thing, Bhante. In the first verse you presented both objectively and subjectively.

S: Yes.

___: The second verse seems purely objective up to now, is there a subject and take it more psychologically or subjectively?

S: It does seem it's meant to be taken quite objectively. No doubt one could force a sort of subjective interpretation but one should not do that. So these three introductory verses set the scene as it were. Let me read my own translation, just those two together.

"Whatever beings are assembled here,
Creatures of earth or spirits of the sky,
May they be happy-minded, every one,
And pay good heed to what is said to them.

Hence, all ye spirits, hear attentively
Look lovingly upon the race of men,
And since they bring thee offerings day and night,
Keep watch and ward about them heedfully."

So one has as it were a situation in which all human beings are assembled - gods, men, spirits of the depth, spirits of the height. One could look at that objectively, one could look at it subjectively, and between them all there is a positive, harmonious relationship and [15] within the context of that positive harmonious relationship between all living beings, the Dharma is proclaimed. The Three Jewels are made manifest and with that we enter into the main part of the sutta. (Pause.) Would someone like to read that next verse?

"Whatever treasure there be either here or in the other world, or whatever precious jewel is in the heavenly worlds, yet there is none comparable with the Tathagata. This precious jewel is in the Buddha. By this truth may there be peace."

There has been a reference in both the previous:verses especially the first verse to the heaven and the earth. So in this third verse it says 'Whatever treasure there be either here or in the other world, or whatever precious jewel is in the heavenly worlds, yet there is none comparable with the Tathagata. In other words take if you like anything which is of great material value, take gold, silver, jewels in the ordinary sense and also take those mythological heavenly jewels - like the wish-fulfilling jewel, Aladdin's lamp, philosopher's stone - take all those things also. Then there is none comparable with the Tathagata, the Buddha is the most precious of all - 'Tathagata' of course means Buddha. (Pause.) So this particular verse lays down this very, very important principle or this very great truth. Whatever precious things, whatever valuable things, whatever values there may be - mundane or spiritual, terrestrial or

celestial, the Buddha is the most precious, the Buddha represents the highest value, the Buddha, the Tathagata is the embodiment of the highest value. This is why the Buddha, like the Dharma and the Sangha is called a 'Ratana', it's not just 'jewel', but the Jewel, the most precious thing, the most valuable thing in the whole of existence. So why is that? Why is the Buddha so regarded, the Tathagata so regarded? (Pause.)

: Because of his nature.

S: Yes, because of his nature. So what is that nature?

: The ideal perfection.

S: The ideal perfection. Is it just the ideal?

: The most highly evolved form of life.

S: Yes, the most highly evolved form of life, it's the ideal actually embodied. If one thinks of consciousness as the criterion of value, then that being which embodies consciousness in the most highly developed form will be the most highly evolved being and therefore the most precious, the most valuable being so far as others are concerned because it's his attention as it were directed to them which will enable them to evolve, most quickly and most easily. (Pause.)

Are you familiar with this word 'Tathagata' as a synonym for the Buddha? It means, it's usually rendered as either as one who has 'thus come' or 'thus gone', come or gone, come to Enlightenment, come into the world like his predecessors who gained Enlightenment by their own efforts or, this is another interpretation, come to Enlightenment by wisdom or also rather gone to Enlightenment through wisdom, gone [16] from the conditioned to the conditioned through wisdom but come from the unconditioned back into the conditioned for the benefit of all living beings through compassion. (Pause.)

: I don't quite get the sense of 'this precious jewel is in the Buddhas opposed to just being the Buddha.

S: I think it is this quality of preciousness or value is in the Buddha, I think that is the meaning. It's not simply this jewel is in the Buddha, it's what is represented by the jewel that is the preciousness of the value.

___: Yes, that's not the actual figure, but the nature of it.

S: Yes, the nature, the Enlightened nature of the Buddha. And then, 'by this truth may there be peace'. What do you think that signifies? (Pause.) Well, it's connected in a way with what was said earlier on about if you make the announcement, the audience is there. It's a very deep seated Indian belief I think Conze touches upon this possibly in his book "Buddhism" that Indians have always traditionally believed in the value or the power of what they called the 'act of truth'. If you say that such and such thing is, and it really and truly is, your utterance, your statement has a sort of force, an objective force in the world itself and can even produce results, even produce effects. This is called satyikirika. If you say, for instance supposing you never told a lie in your life and you say: 'I've never told a lie in my life, by the power of his statement may such and such happen! Well, the Indians believe that it will happen. You see what I mean? There is a very famous story in this connection - I might have told it before - about the people who were crossing over the river in a ferryboat, and the boat got stuck, it stuck on a sand bank and the ferryman could not move it. So there happened to be a holy man on board, so the ferryman requested the holy man to perform an act of truth to get the ferryboat moving again. So the holy man said 'yes, certainly' and he said 'I've been a man now for fifty years and during these fifty years I've always observed the precepts strictly, by the power of the truth of this utterance may this boat get off the sand bank' and nothing happened! (Laughter.) So he was rather disappointed. There also happened to be a merchant

in the same boat, so he was he was asked to make an act of truth and he said 'I've been a merchant for thirty years and during that time I've never cheated my customers', by the truth of this utterance may the boat get off the sand bank, of course it didn't move. In this way, everybody made an act of truth but the ferry boat was still there. And the last person - and the one ... would have never thought of asking was a prostitute. So she said 'I'm the only one left, if you like I should try although I am a woman of such a despicable profession', so she said 'I've been a prostitute for twenty five years and if during that time I've always done my best to give my customers value for money, may the boat move off the sand bank' and it moved! (Laughter.) So, this the story that underlines the tremendous power of the truthful utterance even in the mouth of a person of that kind, if what one says is true and it's as though regardless of one's life and character, it has its effect. It's the power of conviction because if you say something with some inner doubt, how is it to convince others, how is it to produce any real effect. You have to speak out of real conviction and if you speak out of real conviction, this has got quite a different effect. [17]

This is not to say that you can't influence people, can't manipulate people by means of something which falls short of conviction in that sense because sometimes you can have a sort of hysterical intensity, which will influence people. People like Hitler had that, some Christian preachers had that, so Billy Graham seems to have that sort of thing, the Jehovah's Witnesses - it's sort of hysterical intensity. That's a different kind of -thing, it's playing upon your hopes and your fears, and your doubts and your uncertainty, lack of self-confidence. That is not a kind of 'act of truth', that's is something quite different, this is the exploitation of one neurotic person by another. But if you are a genuinely integrated person, if you really understand what you are saying, if you've some experience of what you're saying and if you communicate that with genuine conviction and genuine sincerity to the other person, and this has tremendous force and energy and the Indians believe that it can literally move mountains. So this is why it's 'By this truth may there be peace!' This truth that in the whole world there is nothing so precious that it can be compared with the Buddha, the most precious of all things, the most precious of all beings in as much as he is the most highly evolved, the most highly developed, the Enlightened; by this truth may there be peace for all!

Tejamitra; That's quite an important point about actually having that sort of force of truth behind you. I often used to feel a bit hesitant in beginners' classes and I got the impression that maybe I'm sounding like a bit of a preacher. But if you are actually right in that sort of way then there's no way you're going to be sort of boring people or getting those sort of...

S: It's not just a sort of insistence, it's not an insistence that you are right or anything like that because you're actually speaking out of your personal conviction, personal experience.

: And it's in connection with something much higher, much more integrated as well.

S: And also I think that you will find that as you get closer to those areas of which you do have personal experience, then you will speak with more and more conviction. You know, if you're answering a question about Nirvana, you won't be able to speak with very great conviction, only with a quite modest conviction because you're going namely by what you've read, by what you heard even although you do sincerely believe in the truth of that. But if someone asks you to tell them what it's like to be on a retreat, well you can tell them with full conviction what it's like, what the benefits are because you've experienced that situation so many times. So I think it's also a question of recognizing one's limitations in answering questions and speaking with some modesty and some reserve about those things of which one has no personal experience and saying: well, this is the traditional Buddhist teaching which I personally accept but I cannot claim that I've verified it for myself yet, distinguishing between that sort of area and those areas where you are not just fully informed but fully experienced too. it may be just the two or three simple meditation practices you do. You know what the results are when you put the efforts into them even though you're not always able to put the effort, you know what happens when you do put the effort. In the same way, you know what retreats are like, you know what happens on retreats, you know the sort of effects retreats have, so you can speak with total conviction. So it is best [18] when you are taking a class, to

sort of in a way guide or even steer the discussion towards those things about which you can speak from conviction. Not allow the discussion to get into purely theoretical areas that don't have any real relevance either for you or for the other people there. Sometimes, it's a funny thing some people really like to get into very theoretical questions which have got very, very little bearing if any upon their own lives or your life.

___: Quite often you notice that you may be talking with someone - and they're not talking with their own feelings, it's very hard you really have to work very hard on concentrating on them, they're not really communicating with you, you find them slowly switching off because ...

S: Well you see there is no current of energy flowing between you, There is no sort of polarization being set up, it's all dead; there is no current flowing. So there is no light in the little bulbs either end so to speak; they just sort of flicker, they sort of fade and then they go out altogether. (Pause.)

___: By 'peace', is that Nirvana or ... the end of ?

S: Ah, what's the ... Isuvatthil. Peace is also happiness - the positive mental state. "May bliss abound!" Ah, yes I have taken it much more positively. (Laughter.)

: Will it be, I mean if you really had an insight of what's being said, you would be in a state of bliss and peace and...

S: You would be happy, you really would. Well if you do become convinced that the Buddha is the most valuable thing, the most valuable person in the whole of existence and you also realize that you through the Teaching are now in contact with the Buddha, with that most valuable, most precious thing or person, then your reaction is that you should be very happy. It's like being married to your fairy princess at last, only much more so. (Laughter.) Any further point about that third verse.? (Pause.)

: What is the 'other world'? ... it's 'either here or in the other world'.

S: The other world refers usually to the world after death. Actually the text does say 'saggesu' - in the heavens. Literally 'whatever thing, there is, here and beyond' and then, a sort of elaborating on the beyond, in the heavens. (Pause.) Yes, in this translation: 'Whatever treasure there be either here or in the other world, or whatever precious jewel is in the heavenly worlds', the other worlds and heavenly worlds, these expressions refer to the same thing. In other words, there is no exception at all - whether it's this world or any other world or a heavenly world, an Enlightened human being or the Enlightened human being is the highest form or life, the highest form of existence, the most precious, the most valuable thing of all embodying the highest value. That is to say the value of consciousness at its highest level of development, the Enlightened consciousness. So, by this truth may there be peace, may there be happiness, may there be joy! This is an occasion for rejoicing. Let's stop there for a few minutes. (Pause.) [19]

S: Would someone like to read verse four?

"The sage of the Sakyas of a tranquil mind, realized that cessation which is passionless, immortal and excellent. There is nothing equal to that state. This precious jewel is in the Dhamma. By this truth may there be peace."

S: I'll just read Hare's version of that.

"The ceasing, end of passion, deathless, splendid,
Which here the Sakyan sage, intent, attained,
None is there equal to that thing whatever:
This e'en in Dharma is the jewel splendid,

And by this truth let happiness prevail."

I think I've done better than that personally.

"The waning out of lust, that wondrous state
Of deathlessness the Sakyan Sage attained
Through calm and concentration of the mind -
Nothing at all with that state can compare.
Yea, in the Teaching shines this glorious gem:
By virtue of this truth, may bliss abound!

So the previous verse mentioned the Buddha. So by virtue of what is the Buddha the Buddha. He is the Buddha by virtue of his spiritual attainment, by virtue of his Enlightenment, by virtue of his personal experience of complete mental harmony we can say. So therefore the text says: 'The sage of the Sakyas of a tranquil mind, realized that cessation which is passionless, immortal and excellent.' 'Khayam viragam amatam panitam'. 'Viraga'. [20]

'Viraga' means passionless, as it is usually translated. 'Raga' is quite a strong word in Pali and Sanskrit. It means craving, intense craving, passion, violent desire. So 'Viraga' is the absence of that yes? (Pause.) So 'Khayam', this cessation which is free from passion, which is deathless, is blended (?) precious, yes? So those two lines literally mean, Shakyamuni, better to say the Buddha Isamahito', with a completely harmonized mind, it's usually translated as concentrated but integrated. It means with all his energies, conscious and unconscious, brought together on the highest possible level. That integrated harmonized Shakyamuni experienced or realized that state of cessation of everything mundane, everything conditioned which is devoid of all passion, which is deathless, and which is splendid. In other words these two lines elaborate a little on what makes the Buddha the Buddha. He is the Buddha by virtue of his realization of the Dharma, you can say, and the Dharma is here envisaged in terms of the experience of the cessation, the waning out of everything that is mundane. Very often the word 'Nirodha' is used, especially in the Theravada. (Pause.) 'Kayal is not so much cessation, it's more like waning, the gradual disappearance. If we look at the Pali texts, if we look at Theravada tradition or the Hinayana tradition generally, we'll find that the goal is very often envisaged in negative terms. It is not this, it is the absence of that, it is the cessation of something else, or even simply in terms of cessation, simply in terms of waning out. This is as though, whatever you experience at the present, whatever you can think of, whatever you can imagine, Nirvana is not that; Nirvana is the complete cessation of that. And sometimes the Theravada tradition as it were refuses to say anything positive about Nirvana because whatever as it were positive idea about Nirvana we have, it can only be derived from our experience of the mundane; our language itself is derived from our experience of the mundane. How can you even say Nirvana is knowledge, your idea of knowledge is derived from your knowledge of material things. You say that Nirvana is peace and happiness, but the only peace and happiness that you know anything about is a purely mundane peace and happiness. So the peace and happiness of Nirvana is not peace and happiness in that sense. So you've really no knowledge, no experience of what Nirvana is like. You can only think of it as something which is not a state of non-existence or annihilation, but which is nonetheless the cessation of everything with which you are familiar. It's something totally different, totally other; it transcends everything that you can conceive, everything that you can imagine. This is the more usual way of looking at Nirvana or Enlightenment in the Theravada. (Pause.) The Theravada doesn't even define Nirvana in terms of consciousness because consciousness, as we know it, is a very conditioned thing and Nirvana by its very nature is supposed to be the unconditioned; the Theravada won't even speak of Nirvana in terms of consciousness.

: There is one thing which you've put in the Survey and that is : consciousness is pure and undefined

S: Yes, that is just one text in the whole of the Pali canon. That tradition is present in the Mahayana but not in the Theravada. (Pause.) So, cessation or waning out, Iksaya or kaya or

nirodha; this is very much emphasized in the Theravada. So, the Buddha or the Shakyamuni by virtue of his state of complete mental balance and harmony and integration or, as we can say, by his experience of meditation in that sense experiences, realizes that cessation of everything conditioned, the complete cessation of everything reactive which is completely free [21] from all worldly passions, which is immortal, which is a state of non-death, Amata. This is quite interesting because we find in many of the early Pali texts or what seems to be early ones or relatively early ones, the expression Nirvana is not used. You find the expression "Amata"; the goal is Amata, the goal is a state of deathlessness. One must not forget that the goal is seen in this way against the background of the 'Cycle or rebirth. So within this Cycle one is being born, one dies, one is born again, one dies again I. So, Nirvana is thought of as that state in which there is no death because there is no birth. A state in which you transcend birth, you transcend death; you transcend death, you transcend birth. A state of deathlessness which is of course not a state of annihilation, not a state of non-existence. It is a state you could say of life in which there is not anything that lives and in which there is not anything that dies. This is not a very Buddhist way of putting it, but one can perhaps put it like this. It is life with a capital 'L' which neither comes nor goes, which is not subject to the process of birth and death and rebirth. But again, it is a sort of negative term, deathless; but it has a positive connotation, just as in English, immortal. Immortal means not mortal. But, in our years so to speak, immortal doesn't have a negative connotation; the denotation is negative, but the connotation is positive. We speak of The Immortals; the ancient Greek gods are spoken of as 'Immortals'. But they are not simply beings that don't die; the term 'immortal' conveys something of beauty, something of eternity, something of perfection at the same time. So it's rather like that with this Pali expression - the deathless - you could translate it as the Immortal with a capital I. The Buddha said in one of his very early utterances after listening to Brahma Sahampatti, when he himself had not been inclined to teach, after listening to Brahma-Sahampatti and deciding that he would teach the truth that he had discovered, he said: "Open are the doors to the Amata", the immortal, the deathless state. (Pause.) So this particular verse says so to speak, referring back to the previous verse, the Buddha is supreme in the world, supreme in the universe, he is the most precious, the most valuable object or person; why is that? He is such because he has realized the highest possible state, the state of complete cessation of passion, the state of deathlessness, the state which is excellent, splendid: Pannatta. It is that experience, that attainment which has made him the Buddha. There is nothing equal to that state of enlightenment; it is because that state is the highest of all states that he, being the person that has realized that state, is the highest of all persons. And this precious jewel, this value i.e. that supreme state is in the Dharma; it is the Dharma in fact. The Buddha becomes the Buddha by the realization of the Dharma. So basically the Dharma is not essentially any formulated teaching - it is not the four of this or the eight of that - essentially the Dharma is Nirvana, is enlightenment; this is what it's all about. Sometimes it is said that the Dharma is the 'Narvalo Kutra Dharma', better to say the actual experiences of Nirvana; the Nirvana or enlightenment of a Buddha, and leading up to those, the experiences of the path and the fruit of the stream entrant, the once returner, non returner and Arhant. So two fours are eight, plus one is nine. These are the nine transcendental states and they make up the Dharma. In other words the Dharma essentially is a whole sequence of progressive transcendental stages; that is the real Dharma. Though when one speaks of Buddhism as though it was a sort of religion in the ordinary sense, or even a doctrinal teaching in the ordinary sense, well that's true up to a point, but it is not the real truth. The Dharma is essentially this sequence of transcendental states. In other words, what is the Dharma? The Dharma is that part of the spiral which [22] follows upon the point of no return; that is the Dharma in the true sense, the strict sense. The Dharma is an experience, a transcendental experience basically; not anything else. And all the other things that we call Buddhism are only meant to help lead to the first of those transcendental experiences, in other words to stream entry, or help you progress from stream entry to the higher transcendental states or further transcendental states. So by this truth too, may there be peace or may there be happiness. (Pause.) One could paraphrase what I've just been saying by saying that the Dharma means 'growth' and that your following the Dharma, and that you are following the Dharma when you are actually growing; growing meaning growing from a lower to a higher level or state or consciousness especially from a mundane state or stage to one which is transcendental or from one which is reactive to one which is creative and so on. So Buddhism

or the Dharma is simply concerned with or embodies this particular process. Go on to the next verse then.

"The supreme Buddha praised pure meditation which gives instantaneous results. There is nothing equal to that meditation. This precious jewel is in the Dhamma. By this truth may there be peace.!"

S: Or as I translated:

"That flawless meditation praised, by Him who is the wisest of the wise, which brings instant, reward to him practises. Naught with that meditation can compare. Yea, in the teaching shines this glorious gem: By virtue of this truth, may bliss abound!"

So you see the sort of sequence. First of all, in the first verse or first two verses, you get the cosmological background consisting of all living beings, especially all living beings in a state of harmony. All living beings As assembled to hear the Dharma; beings objective and subjective, both. And then in the third verse, in the midst of that cosmological background or against that cosmological background, is placed or you see the figure of the Buddha, the highest of all beings, the highest of all values, the most precious of all. And then, in the fourth verse, it is made clear why the Buddha is the most precious and the most valuable, because he embodies the highest of all states, the state of enlightenment. And now, in this fifth verse, it is said that, or rather the question is as it were raised, what is it that enables the Buddha, what is it that enables that Buddha to reach the highest of all states, and the answer is meditation. So do you see the sort of sequence?

'The supreme Buddha praised pure meditation which gives instantaneous results; there is nothing equal to that meditation. This precious jewel is in the Dharma, by this truth may there be peace.' It is not enough to have the ideal before you, you need also the means of realizing that ideal. So the ideal represents a higher, in fact the highest, state or stage of consciousness. So you need a means which will enable you to change, as it were your present consciousness into that kind of consciousness. You need something that will transform your consciousness, you need something that will 'directly transform your consciousness or directly work on your consciousness; and what is that? Well, obviously, that is meditation. And this most precious of all spiritual practices, you find also in the Dharma. The Dharma consists [23] of the ideal and also the means to the realization of that ideal. But still the Dharma is a sequence of these transcendental experiences because the lower experience is the means to the realization of the higher. (Pause) So the Buddha, the supreme Buddha, praised pure meditation which gives instantaneous results; how is one to take that?

: You could see the result of the action immediately presumably He means.

S: But do you find that you meditate and you get results instantaneously, what is happening?

: I was just thinking that perhaps the way to look at it is that if you are in a perfect state of mind, Enlightenment, and you sit there and meditate, you will become enlightened instantaneously the means of getting towards that state is more meditation before hand.

S: Yes, right. If you sit down to meditate in a state fit for meditation, you will invariably be successful in your meditation. So this underlines the importance of preparation.

: But that more meditation before as well is preparation.

S: Of course, yes. But not only preparation for meditation in the form of meditation, but for instance waking sure that you're properly rested before you start; making sure you've got enough time; making sure you've been able to unwind, making sure you're in an emotionally positive state etc., etc. If you can sit down and meditate in that sort of way, you can be reasonably certain that you'll have a successful meditation. But of course it includes also so many other things. For instance something might have happened the day before the day

before yesterday which upset you. May be you haven't resolved that so the recollection of it and certain after effects come into your mind while you're trying to meditate, and upset you. So the conditions aren't perfect, and so therefore you don't have a perfect meditation. But to the extent that your preparation for meditation is perfect, to that extent your meditation will be perfect; to the extent that your meditation is perfect, your enlightenment will be perfect. In that sense, the results of meditation are instantaneous. If all the obstructions within your own mind are removed, you can so to speak depend upon the meditation to get you there.

:I suppose on a certain level as well, it also needs to you mean by a successful meditation.

S: What you mean by meditation. It does not mean going through certain does not mean performing a sort of ritual. It doesn't just sit there faithfully at eight o'clock every morning, get there in the end; well Perhaps you will, but not by just sitting there at eight o'clock every morning, however regularly. Something has got to happen while 'you're sitting there, you've got to do something. So it is not just going through the motions of meditating regularly and that's quite easy to do without realizing it you can be having quite successful meditations, but not realize that it has in fact become a routine. I mean, it's only successful if you are pushing on all the time.

:If like, I've heard in some of your tapes about Irregular [24] and Regular Steps, and would you consider it sort of worthwhile sort of meditating, getting up in the morning if you were still really tired, just to try and create more regularity?

S: Oh yes, surely. Well you couldn't expect a very good meditation from that but still you are paving the way, you're trying to Create the conditions by means of which you will be able to meditate properly and have a good meditation; the fact that you can't do it properly straight off doesn't mean that you shouldn't do it at all, because it's only by doing it as best you can that you can gradually improve the way that you do it. All right, even if you feel very tired, never mind, sit; even if your mind wonders, never mind, sit. Unless you're behaving foolishly, do you see what I mean, because sometimes people do behave foolishly; one sees that on retreat sometimes, people know that they are going to be getting up for an early morning meditation, but they nonetheless insist on going to bed late after talking a lot. So, of course, they feel tired in the morning. So it's not just a matter of dragging yourself into the shrine regardless of how you feel; it's also a question of making sure you go to bed early enough, and get enough sleep so that you can be fresh and bright in the morning. In other words ensuring the whole complex of conditions upon which successful meditation depends; you can't neglect all the other conditions and expect force of will to carry you through at the last minute.

: Do you know much about time? Can you change the length of time you need to sort of nip the length of sleep you need in order to feel fresh the next day; is it possible to change this?

S: I think to begin with you should not interfere with your normal sleep requirements too much. You can't necessarily get more deeply into meditation just by cutting down your sleep, that you will find that if you are meditating regularly and well, by which I mean you are actually experiencing some higher more positive levels of consciousness, you will naturally need less sleep. But that doesn't mean that if you cut down your sleep a better meditation will automatically follow, no.

: But I sort of find at the moment I tend to go to bed a bit later than I would like to and I do feel quite tired most mornings when I meditate.

S: Well you have to try to adjust at the other end so to speak and get to bed earlier and get to sleep earlier.

: You won't consider that over a period of time I might adjust, because it might just have been a habit, this tiredness.

S: It could be, you'll just have to see. If after a month or so you are still feeling tired, well may be it is too much to expect you to adjust. One has to see one's age, one's constitution; and how much sleep one requires. Some require seven or eight; some require eight or nine hours a day sleep; some can get by on five or six., But the general tendency is that as you meditate more, you will sleep less. But you mustn't think, and this is the main point, that you will automatically meditate better or more by simply cutting down on sleep by an act of will, unless of course you haven't actually been sleeping; you've merely been wallowing in bed, which is another matter. I mean actual sound sleeping which is doing you good. If you've had a good night's sleep and you still just go on lying in bed, well clearly you [25] should check that, and get up and meditate instead.

: Often you can feel worse, you can oversleep.

S: Yes, right.

: I used to feel that when I was very young, I used to sleep on weekends through till about ten or eleven o'clock, wake up, get out of bed and you'd be terrible, with a headache.

S: (Pause.) So 'The supreme Buddha praised pure meditation, which. gives instantaneous results. There is nothing equal to that meditation. This precious jewel is in the Dhamma. By this truth may there be peace.' So we need not interpret this too narrowly. Meditation means all those practises which raise the level of consciousness, so to speak, by acting directly upon the mind itself. But there are also so many other practises which help to raise the level of consciousness indirectly, just like your whole living situation, right livelihood and so on, the arts etc. So those also are not to be neglected.

: During this period, what type of meditation (was used?)

S: In the very early days of Buddhism during the Buddhas own lifetime?

: Yes.

S: Well, as far as we can tell, the mindfulness of breathing practise goes back to the Buddha himself; this seems to have been standard practise. Also, the recollection of death, the recollection of impurity, the Metta bhavana, goes back to the Buddha. Whether it was actually practised in the specific way that we practise now, is difficult to say; but certainly the development of metta was a practise of major importance, that is to say the deliberate systematic development of metta. They might not have done it in five stages, they might have done it in seven, or whatever, but the meaning and the purpose of the practise was the same. Also there is the recollection of impermanence, recollection of death as I've mentioned death, and the element, the five or six element practise. These were the practises in use in the Buddha's own time, and many of the later practises are just elaborations of these or the kasina practises it seems, the visualization of coloured discs and so on, as a means of concentrating your mind.

So again, do you see the progression? First of all the background, all living beings, the Buddha the enlightened one, the most valuable of all living beings, and then the Buddha is such because he has realized the highest state of mind, and then realized it by means of meditation, and these things, both the goal to be reached, Enlightenment, the means to do it, meditation, these are found in the Dhamma. So it proceeds in a way very systematically, doesn't it? So who practises meditation, who progresses, who goes from one stage of transcendental experience to another? Well, we come on to that next. So read verse six. (Pause.)

"Those eight individuals are praised by the good people, They constitute the four pairs. They are the disciples of the Buddha, worthy of offerings. Whatever is offered to them yields abundant fruit. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace!" [26]

S: This particular verse represents a relatively advanced stage in the development of the Buddha's teaching; it's not certain whether the Buddha himself taught in exactly this particular form, but the general principles are clear. Here we're concerned with the Sangha in the sense of the Aryasangha; not just the spiritual community but even the transcendental community; that is to say those that have entered the stream and even gone beyond that. These are called the 'eight individuals', the pudgalattha or the attha pudgala. (Pause.) So how does one arrive at this list of eight individuals? Well, there's the stream entrant as you know; after the stream entrant comes the once returner; then comes the non returner, and then comes the arhant. So these are subdivided in each case according to what is termed - this seems to be later scholasticism rather than the Buddha's own teaching - path and fruit; the path represents the effort that you actually make, the fruit represents the experience that you have as a result of that effort. Path is not just effort in the sense of an attempt or an unsuccessful attempt, it is the actual process of moving towards the goal. One could say strictly speaking one can't really separate the path from the fruit completely. I mean they are separated in that way in the Hinayana scholasticism, but one shouldn't take that too literally; but one can certainly accept it in a general way. You find there is a stage of initiative, a stage of exertion when you are actually experiencing things in a sort of active way; and then you just sort of no longer are making that conscious effort, you are sort of sitting, not that you are not making it, but you are sort of sitting back and you are experiencing the result of that, you are experiencing the feedback from that, that is the stage of the fruit. Do you see the basis of the distinction? It's as though you've generated enough momentum and you can just sit back and experience the effects of that momentum. So one is the path and the other is the fruit.

: As regards the first one, stream entry, would the path be leading up to stream entry, or will it be one, or would the individual already have been a stream entrant when there is sort of 'on the path stage'

S: Ah, yes. The path and fruit are sub-divisions of stream entrant etc., etc. So there is the stream entrant in the sense of one who has entered the path of stream entry even if you're on the stage of path, you are a stream entrant and you are a stream entrant still of course when you experience the fruit of stream entry. That's why I said that the path doesn't just represent an attempt, an unsuccessful attempt it's the actual process of moving in that direction. But then if you are moving in that direction, in a sense you are already there because, again as I've said, you can't distinguish too literally between the path and the goal. It's not really that you do this and you get that; but if you are actually doing it, if you are entering, if you are on the path, well you've reached the goal. You must not in other words think of the goal is something completely separate from the path. But within your experience there is a sort of, a more active, a more even assertive phase during which you are gathering momentum or increasing momentum deliberately, and then a more relaxed passive stage in which you are, as it were, sitting back and experiencing the after effects of your previous exertion and initiative. But both are transcendental and both pertain to the stream entrant, the once returner and so on, do you see what I mean? (Pause.) So when you are in the path of stream entry, you are a stream entrant. [27]

: But two people who following the..., who are doing the same things, would it be possible for two people to be doing the same things, one of them to be unsuccessful and the other to be successful and so the successful one becomes a stream entrant?

S: Well, they could be going through the same motions so to speak, but ;;hat would be really happening, that's another matter. It's very, very unlikely that any two people would be literally doing exactly the same thing; they would have virtually to be the same person for that to be possible. They may be doing the same meditations, they may be sitting at the same time, they may have started at the same time, but they've got backlogs of quite different karmas; they might have different temperaments, one might be sharper than the other. So in a sense it would be impossible for them to have the same practise even though they would be doing the same meditation at the same time. But their total overall practise, because they were two different people, would not be the same. So in that sense or in that way the question wouldn't really arise because you assume that they are sort of mathematically equal in their practise,

from which of course their temperament and karma cannot be excluded. So it's very doubtful if you 'd get a case like that. And you might come along say to the FWBO on exactly the same day as somebody else, he might be the same age as you, might even be the same temperament, you might start meditating together, but your paths could start diverging very widely and one of you could make far greater progress than the other for no apparent reason, you wouldn't be as alike as you looked. You might even come along with your twin brother, you might be unicellular twins, but you could develop in very different ways. (Pause.) But the very important question is how do you become a stream entrant. I mean this is something that I have gone into a number of times before but in a way you can't go into it too often. I know the standard Theravada answer is, and it is this that comes throughout the teaching, the later teaching as well, that you become a stream entrant by breaking the first three out of the ten fetters. This is to some extent an elaboration that is probably later than the Buddha but nonetheless it certainly gives the essence of the matter; it tabulates it very, very clearly even though perhaps one shouldn't treat it too literalistically, and one attains the other stages, better to say becomes a 'once returner', 'non returner', 'arhant', by breaking further fetters. I think we need not go into those. But certainly it's important to understand clearly what the first three fetters are, how you break them and in that way how you become a stream entrant. So everybody knows I think that the three fetters are the (anybody remember them?) Sakkaya-ditthi, Vicikiccha - sometimes that's rated third - and Silabbata-paramasa. But to put them into plain English (well what shall we say, see how I've translated them), yes it's more poetic and English. (Pause.) Well, I've translated it somewhere.

: Verse ten.

S: One, two, three, four, five, six seven, eight, nine, ten, are: The lie of a perduring self, and doubt and clinging to vain rights and empty vows. The lie of a perduring self. The emphasis is on the perduring. 'Ditthi' is of course view or if you like opinion, conviction, attitude. Sakkaya literally means sort of own body or if you like self, so self view. It's the feeling or the conviction or the attitude or even the philosophy which asserts that you do not [28] change, that you cannot change and clearly this is a very useful belief or view for those who do not want to change. So putting it more psychologically the attitude that is involved here is an attitude of resistance to change. There is something within yourself which you posit as irreducible that is you and it can't be changed; everything has to be organized around that. So basically this particular fetter consists in a refusal or an unwillingness to change, especially a refusal or unwillingness to contemplate the possibility of total radical change. And it also stands for, this fetter stands for, all those different rationalizations or opinions or beliefs which formulate this unwillingness in some way or other, rationalized them as I have said or present them in pseudo objective terms. (Pause.)

So this suggests of course that Buddhism sees man as changing all the time. Change happens anyway, you do change; but usually the change consists in going round and round in a circle, there is no real progress there, you merely change. But the fact that you do just change has a seed of hope in it because if you change you can also change for the better, in other words you can grow, you can progress, you can evolve. So the 'Sakkaya ditthi' is the view that refuses to admit this beyond a certain point. Yes, you will accept that I must change, I must grow, I must develop, but there's always a sort of mental proviso that well, provided I don't have to change this, or provided that I don't have to change that. So this particular fetter is the fetter of resistance to change. The unwillingness to open yourself to the possibility of total change. Change in the sense of transformation, growth. There is something of the old self that you want to be able to take with you and carry with you all the time, wherever you may go, even to Nirvana.

: That would be the most common one that people cling to, is the self, and the unchanging self, like a soul.

S: Yes, the self here stands for anything within yourself which you consider as unchanging. In fact unchangeable and which in fact therefore you are unwilling to change. That self can be anything. You can apply it, you can regard any part of yourself, any aspect of yourself in that

sort of way. That is the part, that is the aspect which is not to be touched, not to be interfered with; I am not going to give that part of myself up, that is me, you feel. That's me and I am never going to give it up. So long as you have that attitude, you can't enter the stream.

: It seems to be connected up with the group and the individual thing, in that this first fetter seems to be almost self identity but in a group term, you have a rigid interpretation that can be threatened as to who you are.

: But as you say it can be pinned to any part of any type of thing.

S: Yes it can be bodily, it can be psychological, it can even be pseudo-spiritual. You can even think, well I am the enlightened person, you can cling to that; that can be a fetter. (Pause.) So any part of yourself that you see as exempt from change or exempt from the process of transformation, or as not to be given up, not to be surrendered, that is the self, which is a false self, hence the lie of a perduring self. Even if it doesn't grow at least it will be changed, so it might as well change for the better. (Pause.) So expressed in more positive terms, what is expressed negatively as breaking the first fetter, this fetter of belief in an unchanging self, is simply a [29] willingness to grow without any restriction whatsoever; a readiness to be transformed, a readiness to transform oneself without wanting to hold anything back. You are ready to be totally transformed. (Pause.) It's like when for instance may be your house is on fire and you can only save one thing, what is the thing that you would save? Well some people would say the cat, some will say their books, others would say their money, others would say their marriage certificate etc., etc. So, it's a bit like that; that one thing that you would like to be able to save from the conflagration of the world, or the fire of transformation, the one thing you'd like to save and to carry with you, that is what you regard as yourself and think of as perduring. And that, your unwillingness to give that up, that's the fetter that's preventing you from entering the stream.

:It might be the Buddha rupa ...

S: Might be. So putting it in very general terms, it's commitment to growth. I mean the positive counterpart of the fetter, this particular fetter is, what shall I say, unconditional commitment to growth. (Pause.)

Well what about that second fetter; doubt. It's not doubt in an intellectual sense, this has been emphasized before, it's more like indecisiveness. Its unwillingness to commit, or not even unwillingness, you don't say: no, I won't commit, because that's definite. It's a sort of wobbling in your commitment, so 'on and off' with it. Yes I will, no I won't. Blowing now hot and now cold. It's a sort of wavering, an indecisiveness, a reluctance to even make up one's mind one way or the other. You're not saying, well no I won't commit myself, you are certainly not saying that. On the other hand you're not saying : I do commit myself.. And you are not willing even to come to the point and make a decision one way or the other, it's a sort of paltering as we say. This indecisiveness, this postponement of making up your mind, postponing the commitment, with or without various rationalizations.

: I've come up against that just recently with so many options here to where to live and where to work and what situations, and sort of in a sense they are all in the same direction but the doubt is just to fall into the first one that comes along sort of thing, or to choose one; that kind of indecision. It's not getting at that kind of indecision?

S: Well that is indecision in a more ordinary sense. But you're sort of undecided as between a number of positive situations within all of which you could grow, but here the indecisiveness is between those situations which help you to grow, and those which definitely don't, and you won't make up your mind to enter in the situation or one of those situations that definitely does help you to grow. That is like 'Vicikiccha'.

: Also it seems it can be also a lack of faith in the Dharma as well, sort of what you're doing is really following the ...

S: Yes, right, lack of faith, lack of conviction, lack of certainty, lack of clarity; feeling very strongly the pull of the conditioned in various ways.

: Will faith be one of the positive counterparts?

S: Oh yes, very much so. (Pause) Also you could say that this state [30] of indecisiveness sometimes expresses itself in a wanting to leave all your options open; you know the sort of way in which people do this, or may be you do it yourselves? For instance, it happens often in this quite ordinary sort of way; say the weekend after next there is a retreat, so are you, to go or are you not? So you like the idea of going but you think well no, I won't say I am going now because in the meantime, something else that I might like to do, you know, more pleasant, more worldly that might turn up, and if I've committed myself already, say to going on the retreat, then I wouldn't be able to take advantage of that. So in this way you keep your options open because you're wavering. If you definitely wanted to go on that retreat, come what may, well you'd just commit yourself to going on it, and not think about other things. But you leave your options open because you haven't committed yourself to going on retreat, do you see what I mean? So that leaving of your options open, is an expression of your lack of commitment, in this sense of your wavering between commitment and non-commitment. You don't say 'no' I am not going because I hope, because I hope I can do something else; you say, well I might go because you don't want to miss out on that if there is nothing better to do. But on the other hand, if there is something better to do than going on retreat, well it would be a pity if you had committed yourself to going on retreat, and then the other more wonderful opportunity presented itself, whatever it happened to be, I'll leave that to your imaginations.

: It's also something might come up that might be more harmonious to your growth.

S: I am not thinking of anything of that sort. But even then, you must be careful because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush! You might be waiting for that ideal community, the community of your dreams, so you are waiting for it and waiting for it and not actually joining the community which is there to be joined.

: It's often that rather than making the effort and turning it into the ideal community ourselves, we expect to just turn up on the doorstep.

S: Yes, ready made. You are just handed the key. (Pause) So you can see how this sort of wavering ties up with the unwillingness to commit yourself to total transformation which is the purport of the first fetter. (Pause.) So the third one, this dependence on, this clinging to vain rights and empty vows, that comes in. You don't do the real thing, you don't commit yourself, you don't go all out for self transformation, but you pretend to be for one reason or another, you go through the motions, and that is the dependence upon the vows and the religious rights, do you see what I mean?

: Why do you think that is?

S: Well, it's for two reasons mainly. It's when, say to use the term 'religion', a religion has been established. It enjoys some sort of social respectability, and you want to be considered socially respectable etc., etc. You don't really believe in it, but you conform, you go through the motions. And then the other thing is that you're not very clear in your own mind, you would like to think of yourself as a person who had committed himself, but you don't really want to commit yourself. So you sort of pretend to commit yourself by going through the motions of commitment but you don't realize what you're doing; you may think you are committed and [31] expressing your commitment, but actually you may be going through the motions of commitment. It's quite easy to deceive oneself in that way, and that happens when you don't put everything of yourself into something. If you are not doing it in a fully integrated wholehearted way, you're only going through the motions - whatever it may be - you are only pretending, really, even if there is only a little of you which is not involved, because total means total. And so therefore we can say that this fetter in a way applies to most

of the things that we do. There are very few things that we do which are done really wholeheartedly. Say when people meditate, very often it isn't wholehearted; go on retreat, it isn't wholehearted; work in a coop, it isn't wholehearted. So it's just 'Silavrataparamarsa', it's not the real thing. It's all right, it helps to some extent, as a discipline, but that's all. It has some positive effect but it does not have the totally transforming effect that it could have because you're holding something back all the time, not giving a certain part of yourself.

: What would be an antidote, what would one of the antidotes or an antidote to that be?

S: Well, faith is also an antidote here, inspiration, conviction.

: You could say to the extent we're not stream entrant, then we would be pray to all three, we are anyway.

S: Oh, yes indeed. When you go, when you perform the Puja, you're just going through the motions usually. Or when you meditate, you're going through the motions of meditating rather than actually meditating much of the time. It's just now and then that you are real Lily performing the puja or really meditating, or really reading or 11 listening or really communicating.

: Could you say that is clinging to something, when you might not be getting anywhere in the puja, but really making an effort.

S: Ah but if you're putting yourself totally into it, if you're making a total effort with everything that you've got, well .. no that isn't silavrata-paramasa.

: But if there is as, if we're not stream entrants, there will be a part of us holding back, and that will somehow try and misuse the situations and twist it in some way, ..

S: ...all the time. But to the extent that you are making a wholehearted effort, however unsuccessfully, to that extent you're actually in the direction of stream entry, that is the difference. If you're just going through the motions in a way that falls short of making that sort of real effort, well you'll just stay where you are, at best, you certainly don't progress in the direction of stream entry.

: I suppose to how integrated we are is, depends how well we do it.

S: Human, yes. Yes the question of integration comes up here. I mean faith is the antidote, integration is also the antidote. And if one reflects, one realizes how many things one does half-heartedly, even the things in which we actually believe in a sense.

: I found Devamitra's talk on commitment last night [32] very useful in this respect

S: Yes, yes. Very often it's a sort of inertia which prevents us from involving ourselves totally in what we are doing; a sort of dullness and tiredness in a way, a tiredness which is perhaps existential.", not just physical, not even mental. You're just tired of this higher mode of being that you're struggling after ' you would like if you could just sort of forget all about enlightenment for a while; well of course you'd find even that difficult. (Pause.)

: I thought about this particular fetter as a psychological prop sometimes, those things we cling to, we have, are psychological things, like smoking for instance, as clinging to vain rights and empty vows, could you stretch that point.

S: There is of course a distinction between using the puja as an actual means of developing, say devotion and just going through it as a routine, as a means of preserving ones image of oneself say as a good Buddhist or as a good order member. No one ever performs it perfectly, not this side of stream entry; you could say not even that side. Yes you've got to start from somewhere and just put more and more of yourself into it. Ah! there is one or two more

points to mention as regards this verse.

Those eight individuals are praised by the good people. Well of course, those who have any sense will praise those who've entered the stream and who've gone any further. They constitute the four pairs, they are the disciple of the Buddha worthy of offerings. Whatever is offered to them yields abundant fruit. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. So here one could say the 'in' has almost a literal meaning. You've got the Sangha in a wider sense, the whole spiritual community, and in that spiritual community you find the jewel of the true sangha, that is to say the Arya sangha, those who have actually entered the stream and gone beyond. And whatever is offered to them yields abundant fruit. This reflects what we might regard as a rather curious Indian belief - you're all familiar with, the idea of merit that if you perform a skilful action, a certain amount of merit accrues to you, which rebounds to your material and even mental advantage and benefit. But the Indian belief is not only among Buddhists, but among non-Buddhists too, that the amount of the merit varies according to the worthiness of the recipient. So if you give alms say to an Arhant bhiksu, you get more merit or more merit accrues to you than if you were to give alms to an ordinary bhiksu who wasn't an Arhant, and may be he wasn't even a stream entrant. So you see the idea? So in Buddhist countries, this is why usually those who are technically monks usually get lots and lots of offerings and things, and other people however spiritually worthy they may really be, very often don't get anything at all. But do you think there is so to speak anything in this idea of there being more merits to be gained by making offerings to those who are spiritually more developed? You'd have to recognize it.

S: Presumably you would have to have the intention, because you could hardly gain merit without the skilful intention. If you thought that a bhiksu was unenlightened when actually he was enlightened, would you get more merit or less? I don't think one can look at this, though some Buddhists in the East do look at it in this way, I don't think one can look at it in a mechanical sort of way, that if he happens to be more enlightened, automatically you get more merit. [33] I think the question of your attitude has to come into it, also.

: It implies receptivity, doesn't it?

S: It must imply receptivity. So if he is more spiritually developed, well there is a greater possibility of receptivity and devotion on your part. Because it is possible to be more devoted to the Buddha than it is to be to an ordinary person; there is more scope for your devotion as it were, and the more devotion, well the more merit presumably. So I think it would have to be looked at in that sort of way.

: Could it also be that, by giving in a sense you are having a communication with that person.

S: one could say that too; and obviously the more highly developed that person is, the more you are stretched in your communication, and therefore the more you grow, the more you gain, the more you get out of it, the more 'punya'; one could look at it in this way but I think one must avoid, even though as I've said Buddhists in the East don't always avoid it, is a merely mechanical conception that you've just to go looking around for the most highly developed person and just sort of insist on that person receiving your dana because that wins you merit; that is not a very Buddhist attitude.

: They can't tell so they take an ecclesiastical sort of view,...

S: Right yes, they take the yellow robe as being a safe signal.

: Right but if he's Maitreya then?

S: Yes, right. There is more merit to be gained the higher up the ecclesiastical scale you go. First of all choose monks rather than lay people because they are the people leading the spiritual life; and choose an old monk rather than a young monk because the old monk has been at it longer, and is therefore sure to be spiritually more developed, make your offerings

to him. So this is why you find in many Buddhist countries, especially the Theravada Buddhist countries, the old monk gets lots and lots of offerings and this is the attitude. There may be something in it, but again one has to be very careful that it doesn't become a mechanical routine as it often does. There must be a subjective element there; I mean there must be your own skilful attitude before there can be any talk of merit in the real sense.

: What Devamitra said in his talk last night about helping a friend out to go on a solitary, and the merits of that person coming back really positive was like seeing himself on solitary. There is no sort of individual return for it, more that it was helping to develop the whole sangha or movement, making it more positive.

S: For instance I remember one of my bhikshu friends in India - he as a Ceylonese Buddhist - a Ceylonese bhikshu, telling me he got really annoyed and angry with his parents because they had given him as a small child to the Sangha to be made a novice monk and then a full monk, so they could acquire more merit, because it's a belief in Ceylon that if parents give a son to the Sangha, well there's great merit accrue to the parents from that. And he said that he'd been sacrificed by them quite selfishly so as to acquire more merit and he said he felt very bitter and annoyed about it. He didn't want really to be a bhikshu, he said he couldn't leave the order because it would upset his mother so much. That this investment had failed. But anyway this is the sort [34] of literalism that one just has to be careful of.

To go off on a slightly different tack, something I was reading by Coleridge, he was a bit relevant here, a bit relevant also to Silabbata-paramasa; he seems to have discussed with somebody once the question of whether it was a good thing to go to church to set an example to other people. Apparently he was talking with someone he knew, who said he didn't so much believe in going to church, but he went to church to set a good example. And this seemed to Coleridge quite horrifying. And Coleridge sort of built up in his mind a picture of people going to church and all of them perhaps going to church to set an example to other people. And he wondered what sort of pleasure God could get from contemplating a congregation of people all of whom had come together to worship him, not because they wanted to worship, but simply to set a good example to other people. But you know this sort of thing can happen if you aren't careful. For instance you might decide or agree to go on retreat to set a good example to other people, or to get up early and meditate to set a good example to other people. Of course one is not unaware of the possible effects of your actions on other people but setting a good example to others in that sort of way must not be the primary motivation for what you do.

: Perhaps you are not getting enough satisfaction out of doing it for yourself.

S: Yes, you must get satisfaction out of doing it yourself, that is very very important because that's also the example you want to set. You don't want to set people the example of going through certain motions, you want to set people the example of a certain experience, a certain life. And if you do it just for the sake or mainly for the sake of setting others an example, you are not setting that sort of example, you are not setting the right example. This is what Coleridge said, you are setting an example of hypocrisy, that the only example you are setting.

: It's the fruit of meditation the example we're setting, that's a good example.

S: Yes, yes. (Pause.) Anyway we've come to that point this morning. (Pause) So we've come to one jewel which is in the Buddha, the jewel of enlightenment. Two jewels which are in the Dharma, that is to say, the jewel Of the goal and the jewel of the means for the realization of that goal, and then the jewel which is in the Sangha or the jewels, in the form of those eight noble persons, Arya puggalas. So you can see how the whole thing progresses, so far from that vast background of all living beings to the Arya Sangha, which is the very central, centre most circle of the whole spiritual community. The inner most circle as it were, not in any 'elitist', in inverted commas sense, but in the real spiritual sense or transcendental sense.

All right let's leave it there for this morning. We'll come back to it this afternoon. (Pause.)

Would someone like to read the next verse, verse seven?

"Those who are freed from desires, are well established in the teaching of Gotama with firm mind. They have attained to that which should be attained, having plunged into Immortality (Nibbana). They enjoy the Peace obtained without price. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace!" [35]

S: So those who are freed from desires, 'Nikkamino', without desires, and are well established in the teaching of Gautama with firm mind. It's not so much established in, but yoked to; it's a different idiom though the meaning is the same. But this expression, "Gotamasasanamhi", in the "sasana" of "Gotama". So those who are without desire and yoked to, conjoined with, harnessed to if you like or changing the idiom, established in the Isasana of Gotama'. So what do we mean by 'Sasana' here; it's quite an important word. I have discussed it somewhere else, I can't quite remember where, some other scripture.

: Yes, in the great chapter sometime ago...

S: But this is, as I have said, quite an important word, 'sasana' is a bit like order in the sense of giving an order. It has a sort of connotation or suggestion of the imperative, something that must be done, something that cannot be resisted. In modern Indian languages, government is sometimes referred to as the 'sasana', 'sasana', Isasana carnal, to exercise Isasana' in Hindi is to govern. So 'sasana' is quite a strong word. Teaching certainly doesn't render it, message doesn't render it. So what does render it? You can't really say it's the Buddha's order because order suggests, I mean in the case of a government, something which is backed up by force, and which can be enforced. So, in what sense is the Buddha's teaching 'sasana', an order? I used the word 'imperative'; it suggests it is something which is obligatory. Not because it is forced upon you by a group or a representative of a group, but because when you really recognize it, you cannot but obey it. Do you see what I mean? It is an order in that sense: to recognize it, is to obey it. Once you've seen the truth of it, you've no choice but to obey it. You sort of make it an order for yourself by the sheer fact of your understanding it. You see the situation so clearly, you see the truth of the matter so clearly, you cannot but act in a certain way. It's as though you had been given an order. It's your own sort of realization of the truth of the situation which gives you the order so to speak. But there's no distinction between you and the order; I mean you are the order because you see it for yourself. So in a manner of speaking you give yourself the order; there is no dichotomy there. So the Buddha's teaching has a certain imperative quality so that when you recognize it, well you just have to follow it, you've no choice, you're impelled to. So 'sasana' has something of that sort of meaning. So when you speak of 'sasana' of Gautama, well it's a very powerful expression. (Pause.) It's like when you recognize a sort of moral obligation; well you see what the situation is, you are just morally obliged to follow a certain line of action, you've no choice; the situation itself, since you see it so clearly, as it were gives you an order to act in a certain way. Your own conscience gives you that order when you see the situation. So the Buddha's teaching is like that, it's a 'sasana', it's Gautama's sasana; the Buddha's 'order', inverted commas. But, you know, his teaching becomes converted by you to an order for yourself and by yourself when you just recognize its truth, you have no alternative but to follow. (Pause.) So the 'sasana' is a, is not just a teaching, it's the ... in a sense sometimes though, it's sometimes used to refer to the whole organized body of the Buddha's teaching and his followers. Because when you're becoming involved in what we call say the Movement, say with a capital 'M', you're sort of caught up in a kind of current. But it's not the sort of influence of a group, this is the important thing to remember, it's something irresistible. It's irresistible [36] because you as an individual see that there is only one particular way for you to behave, one particular way for you to act, you've no choice. So it's not a question of being sort of imposed upon or pushed by a group because you're a weak group member; but because you are an individual, you see the way that things are going, you see the way things should go, and because you are an individual and see that, you just go along with them, you've no choice, you are part of the movement. (Pause.) So those who are free from desire and are as it were harnessed to the

sasana of Gautama, they exerting themselves enter into the deathless state, better to say the state of Nirvana, and they enjoy that, and this precious gem too is in the Sangha.

: What do you think is meant by 'they enjoyed the peace obtained without price'?

S: Without price? "Cheaply" another translation says; what does this one say? (Pause.) 'Freely'. I don't think it really means without price, it's more like without restriction, without conditions if you like. It's not a limited, it's not as though you give so much of effort and so much recompense, you enter into something which is unlimited, you enjoy it freely. You don't have to give a set price as it were for it to be rewarded with a set quantity.

: It can't be bought.

S: It can't be bought.

: It would imply the unconditioned, wouldn't it?

S: It would imply the unconditioned yes. (Pause.)

: I am not clear that 'without a price' refers to the 'they enjoy' or to the 'obtaining', is there a difference there?

S: Not really because you enjoy without price that which you have attained and which you are enjoying. The attaining and the enjoying in other words are much the same thing. This suggests perhaps that you go beyond Karma and the results of Karma, you go beyond as it were profit and loss. There is not as though you've put in a certain amount of energy following the path so you get a certain amount of Nirvana, No, there is no restriction, there is no limitation once you get there, the whole of it so to speak is freely at your disposal. You might have approached in different ways, from different angles, with more or less effort, with more or less suffering but you all as it were enjoy the same unlimited Nirvana. There is not a bit more for those who suffer more because by the time you've reach that level it just doesn't matter. I mean, two unequal finites are equally incommensurable with the infinite.

: I was wondering here having plunged into immortality...

S: Yes, that is ...

: ...implies a sort of leap or a breakthrough or ...

S: Actually, it's more is entered rather than plunged; plunged is a bit free. But this, I mean as a translation, it's a bit free, but [37] yes one could say that in reality, yes, in the sense of plunged because there is a certain discontinuity, there is a bit of a leap, a bit of a jump, a break if you like, just as, I mean there always is when you progress. I said before I think that it's very often that you go along on a sort of plateau for a while, which is very very little, very slow improvement. But every now and then you may suddenly put on a spurt or you may suddenly progress very quickly, just for a short while and then again it's a bit flat, but on a slightly higher level. We don't seem to progress at a very steady, even uniform rate. We seem to progress in this sort of way, we plod along for a while, but then there's a bit of a breakthrough. After that we plod along again for a while, again another breakthrough; luckily we don't have to plod on all the time usually, and also our spiritual life isn't usually a whole series of breakthroughs. Perhaps we need time in between to assimilate the. breakthroughs.

: I don't really like this word immortality as a translation.

S: :You prefer 'the deathless'?

: It has that thing about immortal soul and what we were saying about taking something with you.

S: Yes, right and then of course, we have in English the expression 'personal immortality', which Christians consider very important. That you should be indefinitely prolonged, I mean just as the body is embalmed, it's as though the soul should be embalmed too, so that it doesn't change for thousands and millions of years. it's just the same soul all the time, and this is called 'immortality'. (Pause.) So you see the sort of connection between this and the previous verse. The previous verse has referred to the eight persons, the four pairs, from the stream entrant onwards but this verse now speaks of freely attaining Nirvana itself. (Pause.) There seem to be quite a few things to be discussed here, there are quite a few things that you ought to be asking me about, unless you know about them already of course! This "Nikkaminol (free from desire), how do you intend to take this? I mean do you actually consider that you must be totally free from desire? I mean are you working vigorously to extirpate all your desires? How seriously or literally do you take this, that you should be free from desires?

: I think there are some healthy desires.

S: Do you? (Laughter from group.)

: Well may be I mean like you could sort of in a sense say well, a desire to grow or desire for enlightenment, in a sense ultimately...

S: But we've got here with the word 'karma', this Inikkaminol. So I wonder whether that word 'karma' would support that particular usage of the word desire in English, that's probably doubtful; karma usually means quite definitely desire as we would say for sensuous experience. I mean for instance in traditional Buddhism there is the threefold division of the three levels: the 'kamaloka, the 'rupaloka' and the 'arupaloka'. (You are familiar with that.) The world of sensuous desire, the world of form and the formless world. So it is about sensuous desire, better to say desires relating to things which can be seen and heard and so on, things which can be experienced through the physical senses and even with, for want of a better term, the lower mind; the mind which is concerned with sense matters. [39] So to what extent is desire in this sense to be eliminated. Take for instance, an example - what about food? Food is something existing on the material plane. The desires which you have with regards to food are sensuous desires. Does this mean that you are to eliminate all desire for food or enjoyment of food?

: You have a biological need. Your body needs food ...

S: You have a biological need - yes.

: You'd die before you reached immortality (laughter).

S: Yes.

: You've got to distinguish between your needs and your wants or what is it?

S: Or your needs and your greeds - yes. So how do you know that something is a greed and not a need?

: Well maybe if you go without that thing for a while for a short while - you can then see more clearly what is a need, what is a greed.

S: I mean - presumably your physical organism needs food. So if the time has come for your physical organism to be given food you have a desire for food. So presumably that is quite healthy and it is to be satisfied. But when would that be not healthy and not to be satisfied?

: When you're trying to satisfy a mental need.

S: Yes - when you're trying to satisfy a mental need through the physical object. That would

seem to be the basis of the distinction. I think no healthy person overeats - it's only the unhealthy person who overeats or who undereats. So it would seem, first of all you do need to keep the physical organism going. So you need in that sense to retain those physical/those desires for physical things/material things - which keep the physical organism in an optimum state of functioning. But at the same time you must not use those needs to satisfy or not use those particular objects to satisfy needs which are not physical but in fact mental.

: There's a certain type of desire - a neurotic desire.

S: Yes one could say that was a neurotic desire - well you might -be overeating not because your physical organism needs that quantity of food but from some sense of psychical lack.

Pause.

So what is meant when you say "one here is free from desire" it does not mean one has to eliminate those desires which are necessary to the continuation of the biological process itself upon which our life as an individual, at present at least, is based. [40] Someone wrote to me or may be might have said to me, some time ago - he was an order member but I won't mention names that he thought that people ought to try to reach a state in which they didn't enjoy their food and it was all the same to them whatever they ate. Now what do you have to say to this?

: Boring (laughter).

S: "But what does it matter if food is boring so long as it nourishes you could one say.

:You have an awareness of ... What's your awareness like if you try to block off from how it tastes. If you're trying to develop ...awareness

S: He says you shouldn't enjoy it - the taste of your food. Is that possible?

:Is that possible? No.

S: But what does one mean by enjoying one's food anyway?

: Yeah. Well enjoying the taste - experiencing satisfaction

S It would seem, and I won't be completely sure about this, it would seem that you can't, sort of, digest and assimilate your food properly unless you actually enjoy eating it. But clearly that enjoyment must consist in the satisfaction of a healthy need not an unhealthy one, not a neurotic one - and again, you mustn't get attached to the enjoyment itself - so that suppose circumstances are such you don't get any food - well you might suffer in the sense that you feel hungry but you wouldn't feel angry and upset or resentful or feel that you're being neglected and weren't wanted and were no good - etc., etc. Well you have to be very clear thinking about this question of the giving up of desires because this is the sort of question that people often ask one about. That, well, Buddhism teaches you to get rid of all desires what about the desire for Nirvana? Ha ha ha - they feel they've refuted you; they've caught you out eh: (laughter). just it's really so silly.

: In a lot of cases even listening to music is a desire. i mean cutting out listening to music and going to the pictures, movies may be?

S: One has to exercise discrimination because one has to ask oneself why is one listening to music. I mean sometimes people listen to music and listen to so much of it that they just become - become in a very passive state - always putting something into themselves from outside and not creating, not taking any initiative. They always have to be on the receiving end, like a baby with a big dummy but the dummy is music and they're constantly sucking away at it instead of growing up and taking the initiative and producing and creating things

themselves.

: ... creating for themselves? [41]

S: Certainly one needs a certain amount of enjoyment of things like music, especially, say, really good or great music because it represents a level of experience that one may be just couldn't have obtained by oneself; so it gives you some inspiration or at least stimulation. So it's good to keep in contact with those other greater minds that produced music of that sort or poetry of that sort but not to put oneself in the position of being always at the receiving end and stultifying one's own creative potential.

Pause.

: Surely with this word "karma" - the point or one of the point is that you don't want to keep yourself down at that level of consciousness all the time and that does refer only to the karma lokas: right..) and that you are always indulging or whatever in sense activities, sense desires then you haven't got a chance to raise your level of consciousness.

S: They have to occupy a minor place in your life, meaning - in certain respects - they have to occupy a place in your life if you're to have a life at all. But you know they must occupy a minor and subordinate and instrumental place. You should not live for those things - I mean there's the well known saying 'you eat to live, you don't live to eat'; that about sums it up. I mean there are people whose lives just revolves around food that is obviously very unhealthy - food is just a means to an end so certainly take what you need; enjoy it, relish it but let it just occupy quite a small part of your life and your total consciousness. So the interests of the lower level of one's existence, of one's experience need to be subordinated to those of the higher levels so that more and more emphasis gets placed on the higher level and your centre of gravity, so to speak, comes to be more on the higher levels or your centre of gravity is shifting up all the time. most people's centre of gravity is way down in the kamaloka, but you've got to shift it, shift it up into the rupa loka, the arupa loka and on to the transcendental path. So that doesn't mean that consciousness shifts completely from the lower level but your centre of gravity is on the higher level. (Pause.) I mean the determining factors of your life are located there. (Long Pause.) so what do I say when we're translating (Pause) "who so, desireless, have applied themselves, firm minded to the lore of, Gautama - they have translated "sarsan" as 'lore' but that is not good enough "they have won that which should indeed be won and having plunged into the deathless-state freely enjoy the peace they have attained. Yea, in the order shies this glorious gem by virtue of this truth may bliss abound."

: Is the Peace with a capital 'P' the same peace is it the same word or a different word?

S: No, it's the same word (suvatthi) which means happiness as much as peace. (Pause.)

: You were talking about "they enjoy the peace obtained without price". That is different? [42]

S: Ah yes that is "bhunjamana" - bhunjamana means experience and enjoyment - it's more like eating, tasting. (Pause) 'laddha mudha nibbutim bhunjamana". Bhunjamana is to enjoy like enjoying your food, tasting it, experiencing it.

: What was the word for peace then?

S: suvatthi. it's more like happiness than peace really.

: Is it implicit?

S: It's a state of well being; so when you're happy you're peaceful too. (Pause.) By the power of this, may there be a state of well being a state of happiness, a state of peace.

:I think the original discussion was as to whether "they enjoyed the peace obtained without price" whether that was the same peace.

S: No the word for enjoyment in that connection is "bhunjamana".

:But the word for peace in that connection.

S: No there is no word for peace here - they enjoy, they experience, they relish simply. it's because it's Nirvana which they are enjoying... Perhaps, shall I say, it could be that peace with a capital 'P' in the translation stands for Nirvana because Nirvana is a sort of waning out, a pacification of all desires - yes? but the text speaks of "nibbutim bhunjamana", the enjoyment or experience of Nirvana. Nirvana is enjoyed or experienced without limit, without price - yes. They enjoy the peace obtained without price,- they enjoy the Nirvana obtained without price. Yes I think peace here is meant to translate Nirvana. This precious jewel is the Sangha - it's the people who are referred to - those who are freed from desires, are well established in the teaching of Gautama.

: The freedom arises or the enjoyment arises once you are free of the desires - you are not so much subject to them?

S: Yes. Well people usually think - and obviously there's truth in this - that happiness consists in the satisfaction of desires but you have to go to such a lot of trouble to satisfy those desires and the actual moment of satisfaction may be quite enjoyable but then there's also the fear of loss, the fear of it being taken away - maybe when it comes to the point the enjoyment isn't, doesn't turn out to be what you thought it would be - you're disappointed and then there's the question of sustaining the enjoyment - being able to go on enjoying it and you're doubtful whether that is possible. So there are very few - you know - satisfactions of desires in the ordinary sense which are completely unalloyed or are not spoiled as it were. I mean most people have had the experience - you look forward to something for such a long time, you think you're really going to enjoy it but all sorts of things happen just to mess it up. You look forward to your holiday for months before hand thinking "Oh. I'll enjoy the sunshine and get away from it all - glorious sunny beaches" but then right from the beginning perhaps something goes wrong - there's a strike or maybe the plane doesn't leave - maybe you have to spend the whole night [43] at the airport and then the plane is crowded and maybe your children get sort of sick and irritable. When you arrive at your destination maybe the chalet or the hotel room that you were expecting to occupy is occupied by somebody else and you're shoved in some other place not as good as what you were expecting or planned. Then maybe it rains all the time. So, you see, in the end you begin to wish you hadn't come but you've been looking forward to it for months. So in that way, so often, things go wrong - especially if you plan them it seems.

: I've heard it said ...

S: Hm? So I was going to say... so you get a certain amount of satisfaction by fulfilling your desires in the ordinary sense but even that satisfaction is sometimes so alloyed or so tainted or you have to pay such a heavy price for it, you often think it isn't worth the candle. But on another hand if your happiness doesn't depend upon the satisfaction of desires in this sort of way, well you feel much more happy - you're more happy if you have fewer desires but this doesn't mean sort of impoverishing yourself by cutting down as it were. It must be much more of the nature of an expansion. Do you see what I mean?

: Isn't that moment, I mean the time when your desire is satisfied in fact, the state of no desire?

S.: Yes, yes. I have made this point once. I think I've mentioned either on a seminar or a talk that there was a yogini in South India who used to say this. This was one of her famous teachings I forget the name, but I heard about it - and she used to say that people thought that they got happiness from the satisfaction of their desires but actually the happiness was due to

the momentary cessation of the desire, due to the fact of its having been satisfied. So you are not in fact, the happiness you are feeling is not due to the desire being satisfied but to the desire for a moment not being there at all.

: Then the desire comes back again.

S: And then it comes back, yes. But we all know there's a point that comes - up to a certain point the desire and the satisfaction of that desire are pleasant but if it passes that point there comes to be more dissatisfaction than satisfaction in it because you get involved in such a complicated network of happenings that, you know, it becomes more trouble than it's worth. Just like going on holiday under very difficult conditions - you would have been better to stay home.

: I suppose that is because then one sees the way of attaining that is through desire, the way of attaining that state is just through desire, so you crave more and more but it doesn't work.

S: And usually when you have very strong desires you have a very fixed way of seeing things. You are not very adaptable. I mean if it rains on your holiday instead of being sunny all the time you don't think in terms of enjoying the rain. You automatically sort of just start grumbling about the rain, lamenting the absence [44] of the sunshine which is in a way human but if you hadn't been so set on having the sunshine, enjoying the sunshine may be you could have enjoyed the rain at least to some extent. But you've made up your mind in advance that sunshine is enjoyable rain isn't! Well probably in a broad sense sunshine is preferable it is probably better for the organism but that doesn't mean that you can't enjoy the rain at all; although you've got to be in a bad mood just because the weather has changed. Well, surely you knew that the weather could change especially in England - it isn't unknown to one, presumably. (Pause.)

: Do you think you could say that a healthy desire therefore is a spontaneous one?

S: Well, what does one mean by spontaneous, eh? I mean if one, say, goes back to the question or the example of food - yeah. When, say, lunch time comes, if you're a healthy person, as soon as you sit down to it you will realize that you've got an appetite, you're ready for your food. So your desire for the food is spontaneous in that sense. It's not spontaneous - or it's spontaneous in the sense that you haven't, as it were, during the whole of the morning been anticipating your lunch and how much you are going to enjoy it. If you've been thinking about it all the time, well then the desire and the enjoyment would not be spontaneous and this would be a bit neurotic almost. But if the desire is there just when the object is there to satisfy the desire - when the food is put down in front of you - then you suddenly feel hungry and that is quite healthy. If you're brooding on it, you know, the whole day - that is not healthy. Unless you're actually hungry, you know, that is another matter but if it's just a question of one's regular meals that doesn't usually (?) but when you sit down to it, you know, the desire is there, it arises spontaneously though you might not have thought about it before, not till that moment.

: Spontaneity with these things can be confused with reactivity. I think I mean you see a bar of chocolate and you want it. And I know I've heard people say, well, that's spontaneous you know. But it's not, it's just reactive ...

S: So many of these words in English are very ambiguous; the word desire, the word spontaneous. You probably have to sort out the different meanings within them. You can have a reactive spontaneity and a creative spontaneity. (Pause.)

: So this pure happiness is not the temporary cessation of desire and it's not dependent upon satisfaction, is it more or less a state of positive emotion rather than an actual,

S: I think you can't be happy if your happiness depends on the constant satisfaction of desires, you know, which by their very nature are incapable of permanent satisfaction. There has to be

some other sort of deeper level on which you are happy and satisfied all the time without so to speak anything to be happy or satisfied with. This is not to say that you shouldn't satisfy normal desires - like desires for food and so on but there must be some other level of the mind on which or in which you are, as it were, just happy and satisfied with yourself. You don't need to bring anything in from outside. [45]

: Inner richness rather than having to fill the hole from outside.

S: Well if you have that 'inner richness', it doesn't matter if you have a few peripheral holes which have to be filled from the outside. But if right at the very centre of your being there's a great big hole that is clamouring to be filled all the time with something from outside - well that's a very undesirable state to be in.

: Surely the main point is to refine your desires. I was thinking that really the way you have to be productive to work hard; through work to spread the Dharma. But surely, that's just a refined desire. The pleasure you get from it; the feeling is a refined feeling - helping other people.

S: But then the question arises - well what exactly does one mean by a refined desire? I mean it is a metaphorical term. In what sense is the desire more refined? Usually we take it to mean the desire is of a higher nature. So clearly you can't direct the same old desire to something of a higher nature. So in being directed towards something of a higher nature, the desire itself becomes transformed. This is what we call a more refined desire. Well sometimes I think refined can be a bit misleading as a term because you think of something a little bit anaemic like refined sugar or you say that person is "very refined" - you know, you see what I mean - if anything the desire is more powerful because it's directed towards an object of a higher kind and there is more of strength there.

:... more refined and less selfish and therefore less..(?)

S: Yes, in a way, it's sort of more objective, it's directed more to the needs of the situation or to meeting the needs of the situation rather than simply, you know, one's own purely personal demands. It's broadened out as it were. But there's also the fact that you are more happy doing something than enjoying something. Do you see what I mean? Usually, people think in terms of enjoyment in terms of well "here I am, passive, and these things must be fed to me" yeah? And in that way you get happiness but actually one finds more of happiness - even in an ordinary worldly sense - in doing things and being active. And it is quite interesting that in English as well as in Latin that there is an ambiguity of meaning in this word "passive". We get it in "passion" - I mean for instance in Christianity they talk of the "Passion of Christ" with a capital "P" - yeah? So it means the suffering of Christ; it doesn't mean that Christ got in a passion. The "Passion of Christ" is the crucifixion yeah? So, in Latin 'passio' is 'I suffer' but then so in English passion has changed its meaning where we speak of the passion of Christ - because that's old fashioned English and these theological issues are usually discussed in terms of which they were discussed 300 years ago. So we keep this old prayer book expression "The Passion of Christ" but meanwhile the word 'passion' has changed its meaning. [46]

S: So when you suffer you are passive; something is imposed upon you from outside. So the feeling of suffering is imposed upon you from outside or going a step further, feeling is imposed upon you from outside. Someone does something to you, you feel (you suffer or you feel happy) but the initiative comes from outside; you are passive. So a passion in the ordinary sense is the sort of feeling that you get in response to a stimulus coming from the outside; so you are passive. You see what I mean? So in a sense all passive states are states of suffering; in a sense even those states of passion which are sort of states of enjoyment of a particular object - because you are passive - hm - and broadly speaking as a human being, as a living being, You are happy, you are fulfilled, when you are 'in act'; so true enjoyment is not a passive state where you enjoy something which is given you or thrust upon you or imposed upon you or handed to you. Happiness is the sort of experience of yourself functioning in the

way that you are able to function or even in the way that you ought to function. So true happiness, you could say, is the experience you get when you are functioning in a way that is fulfilling your highest potentiality. Happiness is not a passive experience - happiness must be an active experience.

: Yes, I feel that most of our entertainment is passive when we're watching, say, ballet or something. We're just getting off on other people's happiness - the ballerina's enjoyment of what she's doing - you know - we're getting off on that but it's second hand; it's not us experiencing it first hand.

S: This point has been made recently in connection with juvenile violence. The point has been made that so many young people nowadays - in England anyway - they spend so many hours in front of TV sets. They're sort of passive with regards to everything - yeah everything is sort of fed to them. They don't have to work for anything - they don't produce or create very much.

: Even at school.

S: Even at school. So it's as though there's an imbalance set up you know - they're overly passive, they're being fed, even spoon-fed, all the time. So a reaction sets in that reaction takes the form of vandalism and violence; this is one explanation and no doubt there is some truth in that.

So if you are all the time passive, all the time having things fed to you, being given things, you just become very dissatisfied and bored if you're a healthy person.

:Lately, apparently it's been found that violence and vandalism doesn't really amount to anything - it's not active enough to - apart from a few odd cases. It doesn't really do anyone any harm.

S: It doesn't do anybody any ?

: Any harm. I mean it doesn't, the violence doesn't result in much damage to Property and people as you might think by the number of cases. [47]

S: Oh, I wouldn't.. well it depends how much is 'much'.' Hearing a few reports from the radio recently about East Anglia which is a pretty quiet sort of place, it's gone into millions of pounds just for damage to schools - this last year by school children setting fire to their schools. It's increased several hundred per cent over last year. So they're beginning to get a bit worried about it. I think that vandalism is accounting for hundreds of millions of pounds worth of damage every year in Britain. It might even be a thousand or more million pounds of damage.

: Actually, I saw a street fight a couple of months ago and spoke to one of the guys who was knocked to the ground and kicked about and he was just shocked - he wasn't injured by it all.

S: The point has been made that in the case of gang fighting - the fighting between mods and rockers and all the rest of it - a lot of the fighting is sort of ritualized. This is true - so to that extent - well that is comparatively harmless, let us say. But nonetheless people quite often do get injured even killed.

: It's a terrible waste of energy.

S: Waste of energy - yes. Especially if you don't have any proper ritual even - dressed up in leather and all that sort of thing (laughter) and the silly sordid way in which they do it - it doesn't seem to have any sort of positive quality so far at all. But I think the most important point that emerges here is that happiness, to the extent that we can experience true happiness, is concomitant upon act not concomitant upon the passive enjoyment of something which you receive or which you are given - yes you have a better chance of happiness when you are

acting; when you are doing something doing something as a whole healthy human being, you're not doing something to escape or get away from yourself.

: I'd just like to go back on a point - this of refined desire - because surely that you can be just as attached to what we might call a refined desire as to what we might call a gross desire.

S: Just as much attached to your - you know - your ...

: Mozart

S: Mozart as to ... oh hmm .. dunno (laughter). I suppose, yes I mean the Mahayanists make the point you know, to carry it really to the extreme that you can be attached to Nirvana - you know - which we shouldn't be - er - but at every stage the temptations and therefore the desires become just subtler. I mean perhaps they should be regarded as subtle rather than refined.

: If it was subtle it might be even harder to eradicate.

S: Yes - but then you've reached a higher level - you know - the higher you get, you know, the tougher it becomes too - but then again you know the hindrances may be more subtle but the fact that you've got subtle hindrances means you've got a very subtle insight too because you're completely subtle - you're subtle in all respects you see what I mean. The temptations are subtle - yes! - but that's because you're a subtle person - yeah! I mean if you'd got that [48] subtle temptation before you were a subtle person, well it might finish you - but you are temptations so you're in think there's any real difficulty. (Pause.) I of difficulties that the imagined. This is well Christian tradition, say a subtle person that's why you get subtle a position to deal with them - so don't difficulty, hm. Not as it were extra mean, you know, the subtle person can think not-so-subtle person could never have known - that some people, say, in the those who are saints, see themselves as full of faults. They can't imagine that they're saintly. They see themselves as riddled with faults whereas other people think they're perfect. But their insight is much more subtle - you know so it's not they're sort of pretending to be worse than they are No! They actually see more faults in themselves than other people do - just because their vision is sharper and clearer and their standards are more exacting. Just as in the case of the person who works hard - yeah. I mean someone who's lazy might think that someone who's working eight hours a day is working really hard but, say, someone who's working eight hours a day might think that's nothing - 'what's eight hours a day' 'can't even consider it as work - and so on - hum. (Pause.) But again - the basic point is that, that happiness is an active state not a passive state - really . and so many people - you know - try to gain happiness just by enjoying things in a passive sort of way or when they get bored and dissatisfied they think they want some other kind of enjoyment, some other kind of object. But what they really need is to do something - I don't mean just do any old thing but to be more constructive, productive and even creative hm - I mean if you feel bored and listless go and do something hum. Not, as I say, any old thing but just as you would ask yourself - you know - what can I do? What needs to be done? You'll certainly feel happier doing it than just looking around - you know - for some object to fill that gaping hole.

: Going back a bit. Doubts springs to mind here as being a very passive state.

S: Hm - yes. But in what way? How is it passive?

: One doesn't actually resolve to do anything in that state.

S: You don't do anything. Yes. It's passive in a quite negative sort of sense. Yes. Inactive - it's a state of inertia.

: Another thing I thought with, let's say, ballet or the opera. You go to that. If you're really enjoying that and really getting something out of it you're not really being passive. Well you are to some extent but it's also you need to be quite active you have to be receptive and that is

still quite an active state you have to be mentally alert and receptive.

S: That is true but I think if you have too much even of that, you can become satiated.

: Ah yes.

[49]

S: Or you lose your capacity for true receptivity - yeah - you become merely passive - eh.

: This is why there's a big difference between going to a concert and listening to a record I think. If you go to a concert you have to make an effort.

S: The actual journey, for one thing.

: there's a completely different than just listening passively to a record.

: You can usually go with. someone else to the concert, a friend.

?... (laughter)

: And it can be a visual experience as well as one of Hearing.

S: Yes. So only too often people are looking around for the 'thing' to make them happy instead of asking themselves what have I to do in order to be happy. Not in order to get happiness but to be happy. And usually you feel happy when you are functioning in a way that fulfils your nature. The stomach was made to receive food - so the stomach feels happy when it's receiving food. Your physical body feels happy when it is functioning. You don't feel happy you don't feel physically happy if you're a healthy person if you have to sit down all day; because your body wasn't built for you to sit down all day. If you'd been meant to sit down all day, you'd have great spreading buttocks you see, to keep you comfortably seated the whole day. You know. Some people do but most people don't. (Amid laughter.)

: What would you say about people who sit down and meditate all day - some people in some countries do but we don't.

S: Well in their case they're not sitting down all day because their centre of gravity has shifted to a higher level away from the physical body - otherwise it would just be self torture - and their physical consciousness is just on the periphery, as it were. So that is quite different - they are active on a higher level because again meditation is not a passive receptive state, at least not in the ordinary sense - it is much more an active state because you're generating skilful mental states in a continual stream. So that is rather different. But if you are a healthy person and are just sitting still; remaining in the ordinary kamaloka consciousness well, what will happen after a while, what will you feel - you're uncomfortable and restless, you want to move about, you want to go and do something, you want to stretch your arms, you want to go and run. You want to go and jump - because happiness for the physical body consists in functioning. So it's the same with all your faculties - you can see, you can hear, you can think, you can feel, you can (?), you can will, you can act. So happiness consists in functioning and not just in any way but in functioning as a human being is built to function. In other words... and to grow.

[50]

: I got in touch with that once on solitary, having nothing to do - I didn't take much on solitary - and, just the happiness that I'd got in touch with in my body, I ended up jumping and skipping and running; just enjoying my body.

S: Well, just enjoying being a healthy animal.

: It felt very much like that.

S: Quite. But then one has got other sorts of capacities, other sorts of functions, other sorts of faculties. You might have a faculty for poetry or for music or for drama, or for meditation (Pause.) or for studying the dharma. So if you are able to fulfil yourself in this sort of way, if you are able to function in these ways, then you will experience a higher sort of happiness.

: There are certain times, I'm not sure when about, it's like the objective needs of the situation. I mean may be the things you are not particularly happy doing because they don't probably fulfil your nature but objectively it needs to be done and there are time when things like this need to be done.

: It's happening a lot all the time.

S: Well there is quite a lot that could be said about that. I think it has to be seeing the needs of the objective situation, not being told the needs of the objective situation. Do you see what I mean? You appreciate the difference?

: That it comes from yourself.

S: So, if you see a need, well surely since you're a healthy human being, you will respond in such a way as to meet that need. But if you don't respond, you've not seen it. For instance, we've been reading the paper about the plight of refugees in different parts of the world but actually we don't see that objective need, we don't really hear about it. So we don't take any notice of it, we've got hardened to it, we don't respond, we don't do anything about it. We just say to ourselves too bad, turn the page and look at the pretty pictures. This is what usually happens but if you really see an objective need, then you have no alternative but to do something about it. The difficulty is sometimes people talk you into believing that there is an objective need of a certain kind and you do your best to meet it without seeing it for yourself. I think that seeing for yourself is important. Sometimes you may see it, but not see it very clearly, so the desire to meet that objective need is not very strong. And sometimes of course there may be a number of objective situations which you see at the same time and you aren't in the position to meet the needs of all of them but you might like to, you've not got a thousand arms like Avalokitesvara, you've only got two but there may be a thousand situations so what are you to do? You are also, your own needs represent also an objective situation, those also have to be considered, your true objective needs - if they are objective they are true so to speak. But I know that quite a lot of people feel this. So therefore I think it's good if they feel the clash between or conflict between the needs of the objective situation and their personal needs. I think that one should clarify the situation by asking [51] oneself, well do I actually see these needs of this objective situation for myself or is it simply someone else telling me that there is a need and I am just accepting that'.

: In a way to stick almost too rigidly to personal needs and the needs of an objective situation is to almost stop denying that your personal needs are involved in the situation (?) that the overall situation at the co-op is not your personal need, that's what you're almost saying.

S: Well, you have to ask yourself whether you actually feel that, it may be a need in an objective sense but a need must be something that you feel.

: Like you may have been working in an office most of your life, say for twenty years and, but there is a need for say or something like that and in a Centre situation there is no one that can do that work your needs are to have a rest from that and do something else may be... ? (?)

S: If you see the objective situation and yourself feel the need well then you will respond accordingly. But you should not just sort of see the situation and someone tells you, well a treasurer is really needed and then you accept that which is actually is a bit of pressure, then you may start resenting it later on. But if you see yourself and feel that there is a need, then act accordingly, well the chances are that you will not feel that resentment, at least not so

quickly. So then it must be your own real feeling that there is a need not just for a want of a better term, your super-ego telling you that there is a need. (Pause.) We were talking about this question of needs here recently at Padmaloka the question came up and I made a few points which may be developed here. This was with regard to people's need for a retreat every year. It was stated for instance that everybody needs a retreat every year. So I pointed out that this in a way was not quite the right way to put it, it was as though there was a statutory need - everybody needs a retreat every year. The question arose how that need was to be met in the case of those working in co-ops. Whether the co-op should pay for their retreat or whether they should be encouraged to save up for their retreat. So I made the point that a need is a need, a need is something that you feel. If you really feel a need, you will take steps to satisfy that need. So supposing that someone had in the course of the year \$500 of pocket money - let us say for the sake of argument, it's only \$10 a week which is much less than a lot are getting - and your retreat let us say costs you \$50. You say that you need a retreat but out of that \$500 pocket money, you're not prepared to try to save \$50. Can it be really said that you've got a need for the retreat because a need is something that you feel. You see what I was getting at. You have to be careful not to regard a need as something, as it were objective and almost statutory apart from the feeling that the person concerned has. If you have a need, a real need, an objective need - objective here doesn't mean alienated from your feelings - then you will take steps to satisfy it.

: Yes but at the beginning of the year, you might not feel that there is a need for a retreat so you don't save any money, then by the end of the year you feel you really need one but you haven't got any money.

[52]

S: Presumably the need in this case would not have sort of suddenly hit you with a 'wham' right by the end of the year, it would have been growing. So presumably one should start thinking well, it looks as though I am going to need a retreat, I am feeling the need of a retreat, by the end of the year. OK, I've better start saving up quick, I just stop other things.

: What kind of Retreat? More a solitary not just

S: Perhaps more a solitary or whatever is as it were needed.

: One way I did not need strongly to come on this retreat this weekend. I was feeling quite positive before the weekend and could have worked all weekend but I came here because I wanted to. More than anything it was a desire to be here with everyone else, to be ...

S: Well, that is also a need because you needed to be with everybody else as you say. So that need carried the day. So it had a slight edge over your need to be in the other situation. It is not a question of non-fulfilment or a fulfilment - you've got different needs which are being satisfied in different ways - it's just a question whether you give more weight for the moment to this particular need or feel it more, just a little bit more, because sometimes yes one is in the lucky position of having the possibility of fulfilling a number of different needs. You just take your choice; there are two positive things to do one particular weekend, you just have to decide which is the more positive, which you feel like doing more or which is the greater need. That's what you did, that's why you are here. Not that you could have been happy there, yes you could have been.

: ... you were just about at the point of breaking down before you went on a solitary. Well, I thought that's no good at all. Before you went on a retreat you got yourself into a bit of a mess. You really needed a retreat.

S: Well if you got yourself into a mess in that sort of way, the chances you need a change and a holiday first. The chances are you aren't in a position to handle a retreat. But the basic point I am making is that a need is a need. A need is not something that you can tell somebody that they have even though they didn't know it before.

: Maybe someone needs to go away on a retreat though they haven't seen it themselves.

S: I think one has to be very careful about these situations because I think whatever happens you have to connect up with what the person is feeling, I think that this is very important. If they have no feeling to go on a retreat you should not say 'oh, you need to go on a retreat, you ought to, you must' and sort of push them off, no. I think this is not just the right way to go about it.

: Why do they need to go on a retreat ?)

S: We are seeing the need here as something quite divorced from their actual feeling about the situation. The feeling about the situation may be wrong but You've got initially to establish some connection with what they actually feel and what they do has got to have some relation [53] to what they actually feel, otherwise they just get more and more alienated however technically right it may be to go away on retreat. I have seen in the case of some of our friends, they got really sort of worn out and all that sort of thing and then say 'well I suppose I need a retreat'. But you can tell they don't want to go on a retreat, they'd like to go on holiday. But they feel it's not very respectable just to say I well I am just going to go on holiday' so they sort of put it in terms of a retreat because that's acceptable. But it is not quite honest, it is not quite straightforward. They should say 'well I need a holiday and I am going to have a holiday', not sort of pretending it's going to be a sort of retreat.

: But sometimes though let's say, they working in a coop, they need a break. Some people you get, they just work and work it may be pointed to them they may not even see clearly what's going on.

S: But then it's not a question of telling them 'you need this or you need that'. Just say I look this is what you are doing, do you realize what is going to happen after a few weeks if you carry on like that'. Well then they will see it for themselves; but they've got to see it and feel it for themselves, you've not got to impose it on them as it were (Pause.)

: You feel may be it's best for people to get, talking about pocket money, the amount of money they earn and then they make the decision more themselves for retreats. They not, they get \$5 a week, it all comes out of the co-op account ...

S: I think you've got to be very careful that people don't get into a mini welfare state situation in which they hand over responsibility for everything including their quite personal things to the chairman or the manager or whoever it happens to be and are just looked after; I don't think it's a very desirable situation either for them or for whatever it is they are connected with. This arose some months ago in connection with retreats here because people were turning up here on retreats and saying 'my chairman will pay' - which was fine - but then sometimes the chairman did not pay, he couldn't pay because he did not have any money, he said he will pay next month or in six months time, that's wasn't a very desirable situation for obvious reasons.. But the point was that the individual person, the person who actually comes on retreat had got into the habit of not thinking it was his responsibility to find the money because he after all was the one who went on retreat, he left it all to his chairman. So there is a sort of abdication of personal responsibility, that was not very desirable, so something was said about that and to some extent it was corrected.

So to come back to the point I was making here, if for instance you had your pocket money in your hand every week and you just sort of spend it and then you say 'could I have \$50 for a retreat because everybody needs a retreat and I ought to go on one' and therefore your co-op has to give you the money. Well, it should not do so if you had sufficient pocket money to be able to save because had you really felt a need for a retreat, you would have certainly saved that money, because it was enough for that purpose. If you didn't save it, it meant you didn't feel the need for it. So you can't how claim the money from the co-op extra on the grounds that you need [54] a retreat because 'need' is not an objective category, it's a Subjective category. (Pause) You started thinking as if it was a sort of objective right to which you are

entitled, you want it because you are entitled to it rather than because you actually need it. Again, it's the old thing called 'wages' creeping back.

: Two weeks' holiday.

S: Yes, statutory. (Pause.) But this whole question of being in touch with what one actually feels is very important. You raised it originally in connection the needs of the objective situation. I think if you don't actually feel the needs of the objective situation, you won't be able to do anything about it anyway. The only thing you must be careful is not allowing yourself to be pressured by other people when you yourself do not see and feel those alleged needs. But the only difficulty is when there is a conflict of interest between the needs of a number of objective situations, all of which you would like to help, and then you have to choose which one to select. (Pause.) How does this bare upon India? and the illustrations

: I think it's a predisposition to operating in certain ways which I notice . a difference of... I can see people here saying 'well, I don't feel the need of the situation therefore I am not going to see it, I am not going to feel it; you see what I mean? People on the whole tend to be more predisposed to outwardgoingness to meeting needs and so on because I think mainly of their more positive set up. '

S: Also the more acute basic need which they encounter....

: Right, right in a family and everything. I think also may be in this country we're most accustomed to be entertained and being passive and having things fed to us rather than going out to meet the needs of other situations with regard to other people.

: On the other hand, in the Order, people are finding the difference between meeting needs which arise out of the Order situation or out of our Dharma work and ordinary social needs. They are realizing that with social needs, it's almost automatic; but they are realizing it does not quite work like that within the Order. They will say they will meet such and such a need but it's a different matter, actually doing it. I think half the time it comes to, it boils down to the same thing but in a slightly different shade.

: When you say that to be happy is functioning in a way that fulfil your nature, it all depends how you see what your real nature is.

S: Yes, yes. I did add at one point, as a human being. It's the fulfilment of the total needs which you have and sought the fulfilment of them by way of a proper order of priorities. You as it were have got a hierarchy of needs. They must be satisfied as a hierarchy. You've got a need, let us say, to eat, a need to meditate, a need to play; but the more important needs, the needs which are more central to your being as a human being and as a potentially enlightened human being, these have to be given the bigger place and will be given the bigger place as you grow, as you develop. In that sense there is a hierarchy of needs; they not all equally important, their satisfaction or their fulfilment is not all equally important. You may be fulfilling certain needs but other deeper or even more [55] basic needs spiritually may be frustrated and therefore you will not be happy. You may be living in a beautiful place where food is laid on for you, pleasant company, nice records to listen to but may be you aren't allowed to meditate, you could feel deeply frustrated and therefore not happy. (Pause.)

: What really I'm thinking about is maybe you can see the objective needs of the situation, you actually see them and you are acting on that, but every one nature is different and may be you will be better off functioning in a different way. So in a sense it could still be going against the grain in a way, may be there would still be a better way for you of functioning but for the time you need to function in that way.

S: But you are using the word 'need' in a slightly ambiguous way, need in the sense lit would be good in terms of your overall development to do such a thing'. But even so one has to be careful not to get too far away from what a person actually feels, including feel that they need.

There is another point in this connection too is that there are all these various objective situations, the needs of which could be fulfilled. You can't possibly cope, help to cope with all of them, you have to select; you have to select partly on the basis of what seems to be greater needs than others, also on the basis of your own particular feeling for a particular sort of situation, may be to some extent based on your capacity to deal with that particular kind of situation. (Pause.) There is also the question, with regard to seeing a need and being ready to meet it, there is the question of your own integration, especially the integration of your reason and your emotion for want of better terms. Sometimes we can see a certain situation but the appropriate emotional response does not follow upon that. I think there is some difference here between a lot of English people and a lot of Indians. The Indians on the whole are very often more integrated in this respect. For them therefore to see the objective needs a situation, that is to understand the objective of a situation, is very quickly followed by a feeling of the objective needs of the situation and therefore action. But in our case, very often I think our emotions are alienated from our understanding, our seeing; to a certain extent, we see a need but we don't actually feel it and therefore we don't do anything. So in a sense you don't really see it unless you also feel it; your 'seeing' is an alienated thing unless you also feel it. Therefore as I see it in a way, there is no problem if you are an integrated person to see a certain need of a certain objective situation is right because you feel; you don't have to convince yourself, 'The only problem that, as I have again said, if there are a number of objective situations I you will be feeling for all and then you just have to, just meet the need which seems to be the greatest or for which you just feel best equipped to meet. There might be hundreds of babies dying of malnutrition but you may not have any medical knowledge, you may not be able to do anything for them so you have to turn to something else, much as you may feel for the babies. (Pause.) So perhaps part of the solution of the whole question is that one should be more integrated and then one would actually feel people's needs instead of just seeing them or hearing them or just thinking of them. If you took up the daily paper and you really felt the needs that you read up, you just would have to do something about it. But perhaps in many cases, you can't allow yourself to feel because you know you can't objectively do anything, so why should you, as it were, torment yourself - it does not help anybody - with feelings which cannot but be frustrated.

[56]

: This is why people feel so cut off about all these things going on they can do nothing about.

S: Right. Many of our Indian friends are still living in a very primitive way; they don't read newspapers or listen to the radio like we do, they don't know what's going on.

: You don't have the same news in India.

S: So they are not confronted by these situations of needs and responsibility and feelings in the way that we are. This is something that is happening as communication increases all over the world. We are hearing all the time about all sort of things about which we are powerless to do anything at all; we just can't do anything. In a way, this is not good in terms of personal integration because we see what is going, we see that something needs to be done but it's pointless trying, feeling that something should be done because in most cases even if we felt more objectively, there is nothing that we can do. So we tend to inhibit our feelings and again, though understandable, it does produce this alienated sort of effect on us.

: Don't you think that the sensationalism through which these things are recorded relies on a sort of alienated response or...

S: "it assumes it" or adheres to it to get through.

S: Yes. Well, there are some things, pictures published in the papers nowadays and things are going on the television screens that would not have been allowed a few years ago; quite horrific. Dead bodies are quite common., recently shot; political prisoners and all that sort of thing, you get in full details. You would never have had that a few years ago.

: Apparently, they showed the (storming of the embassy live on television,. people really upset at the end when they stopped showing it the sensationalism of it.

S: I think in Western countries they've got a lot to answer for here. for instance I made the point some time ago that The News; what are the things that are usually featured most prominently on The News, anything to do with violence, especially the local radio programmes they give details about street accidents, road accidents. You don't need to know that, you don't need to know the name of the unfortunate person who was knocked down and killed, with details of the accident; that is only of interest to their next to kin, unfortunately. If you are interested, you are just a ghoul as it were, just a 'preta If at the end of the year, it is known that so many hundred people have been killed in action, that is news and that should be given but not full gory details of individual instance or accident; that is not news, that is just sensationalism and this is given pride of place. (Pause.) But you don't get that in the Communist countries; and also you at the 'non-quality' press, let us say. What are the sort of things that feature as news, it's not news, they aren't newspapers. You know quite well, I don't need to tell you the sort of things that most young men should not look at or read about. It's divorce cases, sex scandals, swindles; not presented as news but all with the sort of gory details. What sort of effect is this having on people's mind, what sort of outlook is it giving them. (Pause.)

[57]

: It gives people a very distorted view of the world.

S: It does, yes. Apparently there has been a report published recently, a quite solid scientific piece of work about news-reporting on radio and TV by some research centre or group in Glasgow. Apparently solidly documented in detail the fact that all news broadcasts are heavily slanted with certain assumptions written with the very terminology that they used, especially when reporting industrial matters, particularly the strikes; one can tell that oneself sometimes. For instance you notice that certain people are described at certain times from different point of views either as terrorists or gunmen or hostage takers.

: ??

S: That was interesting to see in the case of Mugabe as the negotiations proceeded; he was gradually promoted from 'terrorist' to being a statesman; by day you could see the transformation going on. It's like that famous cartoon that appeared during the war when Hitler no just before the war, no at the beginning of the war - when Hitler and Stalin signed their mutual non-aggression pact after having slated each other and denounced each others for years and years. So they are represented - I think this was one of the famous Low cartoons Hitler, he was very politely bowing to Stalin and Stalin putting his hand on his heart and raising his cap to Hitler; and Stalin was saying 'the filthy fascist dictator, I presume?' and Hitler was saying 'the bloody Bolshevik monster, I believe'. (Laughter.) It's as though to come back more to the original point, if you are alienated from your true feelings sort of 'surrogate' feelings are given you. If people were really integrated with healthy feelings, they just would not want to read or to listen to all that sort of rubbish, there would be a protest. They are alienated from genuine feelings, they've got these sort of very twisted, distorted, unhealthy even neurotic feelings which are satisfied by the media in various ways.

: It's like people getting all steamed up with what is happening on 'Crossroads' instead of what happening in their own living room.

S: 'Crossroads'.?

: It's... soap opera.

S: occasionally, while I was tuning in for the news or something like that, got the tail end of ... what's that soap opera on the radio?

: The Archers.

S: Just after a few seconds of it, you can tell the artificiality of it, it's amazing; So, off it goes. But presumably there are people listening to it, glued to their radio sets.

: They've probably listened to it for years and years ...

S: So there is this very important question of responding to situations of integrated people because if you are not integrated, you can't hope to respond in an healthy, positive, dynamic way and you can't really do anything about the needs of any objective situation because what you do depends on your feeling the need; and you've got to have feeling in an healthy integrated way for that to be possible. (Pause.) [58]

I think Lokamitra sometimes felt, talking about the situation in India to people in this country; though very often they can see the need but they can't feel it.

: I felt that quite often that people, part of them really appreciate it but it does not quite get through to ... action. (pause.)

(Bhante: ... although we have a few more minutes, perhaps we should just stay with that subject rather than start a new verse.)

: In a sense the media not only feeds it, it promotes it is a pity it isn't used more positively (?)

S: Indeed. All these media are immensely powerful; it's such a pity there are not used in a more positive and more creative way, at least a more positive way.

: (?) very positive, very powerful effect

: I am surprised that many people read newspapers within the have never taken much interest in newspapers because it's mainly full of trash but you get a feeling that people want to know what's going on in the outside world...

S: that's fair enough, that's valid surely?

: ...but it's the way, you can't really get to know what is going on in the outside world through the newspapers because of the slant in the newspapers.

S: Well, it depends what newspapers you read and also whether you balance a newspaper with one particular point of view against a quite different point of view; you have to read intelligently and between the lines so to speak.

: Do you have good newspapers and more 'trashy' kinds like...

S: Broadly speaking yes; in this country anyway. I won't say that newspapers are more reliable as a whole, but there are some newspapers from which you can dig out the news more easily than others. (Laughter.) Some newspapers don't contain any news. They contain an absolute modicum of news. There are pictures of scantily-clad ladies and lots of soccer results and bits of Snippets of news in between. Well, one does not read that sort of papers. There are sort of periodicals of another nature which do give you analysis of world news and so on. Papers like The Economist give you quite hard news or The Financial Times.

: There are glossy kinds of papers, what they call 'Newsweek'...

S: Well there are glossies and glossies. American publications like Times and Newsweek are almost totally unreliable - they're heavily slanted; you can dig up some facts but you have to be quite careful, they are so slanted. (Pause.)

: You really got to know why you read, what you really want to get out actually...

S: Also the things that are headlined aren't not necessarily the most important. There are lots of news that does not get through at all or it just finds the back page or the bottom of an inside page and [59] really ought to be featured. In a way you're automatically misled by the size of the type and the amount of space given; but you must be very careful not just to follow along those lines and think that the most important news is necessarily on the front page.

: But that means you almost have to read the whole newspaper...

S: ...that's what most newspaper readers do. (Laughter) I don't encourage anybody to read newspapers.

: I think the discussion we've been having is useful for people working in a coop; you can't expect them to pull their full weight as it were until they know exactly what they feel about the co-op and what they feel themselves they do have a little difficulty.

: In communicating exactly what is the situation to the co-op workers so they can respond to it so that it's not just the chairman or the treasurer or secretary that knows what's going on, but workers know what's going on.

S: I think you have to be very careful that a situation does not develop in which the majority just do the day's work and then don't think about it after that; and don't accept any sort of overall responsibility for the growth and progress and success of the co-op and just leave that to the two or three more active experienced people. If that happens, well it's not a coop; it may be a co-op in name or technically a co-op but it is not a real co-op. In a real co-op everybody accepts responsibility for the success of the venture and does whatever they can; but one has to be really committed to the co-op situation. I think it's beginning to dawn on people that being in a co-op is not a soft option, It is not just a question of being able to make a bit of money in easier ways or more pleasant ways than out in the world, but without having to bother how the whole thing is running. Quite a few people in the Friends want to do just that; they just want to have a nice quiet little job two or three days or two or three afternoons a week which will bring them enough money so they can just live on and do the things they want to do, but they don't want to concern themselves with whether the co-op is functioning successfully or not; but that doesn't make a coop.

: (... ?) it's really going back to working in the old way.

S: Yes. But there is still quite a lot of that sort of spirit or attitude around.

: It seems that as far as I can figure it out, it's related to wanting to spread the Dharma to other people. If you want to do that, you can't just cover basic needs you've got to earn more, you've got to do all you can

S: Yes., You've got to make a success of the coop; not because you yourself as a person will get more out of it as an individual because you're putting all you can into it, but also so that you don't just cover your own wages, or just cover the wages of all the co-op workers, because of good healthy surplus it can be ploughed back into the centre or some other area of the movement. (Pause.) It's also very much bound up with the question of responsibility; everybody has to take responsibility. I do really notice that in the mass of [60] people - and I am speaking very generally now but this also applies to some extent in fact to a lesser extent within the Friends - the majority of people just want to be looked after; I have come to this conclusion. They just want to exert themselves sufficiently to just meet certain basic needs and no more than that; but you can't run a spiritual movement on that basis. You get a situation developing in which the majority just try to get what they want out of whatever system it is but leave the actual management and thinking and the worry and the responsibility to either the more ambitious or the more public spirited minority but reserving sometimes the right to criticize the people who are doing the managing. You can't run a co-op

on that sort of basis but this is what usually tends to happen if you aren't careful. The more capable sort of tend to take over the responsibility or are pushed into having to take over the responsibility because of the inertia and lack of interest of the majority. So you must not allow a situation like that to arise within the co-op otherwise it ceases to be a coop; you might just as well set it up as a different kind of enterprise with bosses and workers. (Pause.)

: Taking responsibility in a co-op is a very good way to build your commitment.

S: Indeed.

: It's interesting it is something that you have to take, it is not something that can be given

S: Yes, you have to see that there is something that should be done and you feel responsible therefore you act. You see that someone has left out a chair in the rain, you see that; some people would just see it and don't think anything more but another person goes and brings it in because they feel responsible in that situation.(Pause.)

: (?) (Laughter.)

S: When I came back from my tour I was quite annoyed to see that good dining room chairs had been stood on for decorating purposes and had got white-wash over them; this indicates the lack of responsibility. There are lots of things happening all the time everywhere; it means people don't accept responsibility.

: I think there is a paradox. Responsibility can be generated by ownership and if there is no sense of ownership there is no sense of responsibility

S: Yes, this is another question that arises here. Under the capitalist system, it seems that what motivates people is the profit It does seem that under a totalitarian system, you can only get things done more or less by coercion; the difficulty is to find an ideal that is able to motivate people as powerfully as the profit motive or as it were metaphorically to coerce them in the same way as a totalitarian regime coerce people. Do you see what I mean? Within the context of the Friends and especially the Order, the belief that you have in the ideals of the whole Movement and your commitment to the three jewels if you are an order member should be sufficient to motivate you in everything that you do in an even more powerful and effective way than the profit motive but unfortunately only too often it seems that it is not enough I .. There are only these three possibilities: that you are motivated by the profit motive, that's capitalism; [61] or you are, well, not motivated, but you are made to do things by force, by threats. That's the totalitarian - could be fascist, could be communist system. I say communist for want of a better label because it isn't always communism. Or you have to be motivated by a spiritual ideal in which you deeply believe.

: (?) we do have Friends working in the co-op and a lot of Mitras and Order members. I think that the Friends () so strongly committed to that ideal that they're going to be motivated.

S: Well they can't be members of the co-op. They can be employees but they cannot be members and you will not expect from them the commitment ...

:(But they will be in a division of workers and members?)

S: Well no because members of the co-op as such are neither workers nor members or managers. They are both. They are all workers and all managers, managers in the sense they all have responsibility even though certain executive functions may be delegated to certain individuals.

: But the Friends will just be workers?

S: They will just be paid employees. I believe there is a threefold classification; there's employees, workers and members.

: Because presumably it's the committed People who see that the vision has to (feed) the needs of the co-op. Where the co-op's going and someone who's just on the fringe doesn't really maybe see the full function of the co-op.

S: For instance there's not much point in allowing a Friend to become a member of the co-op and when part of the function of the co-op is to make money for the Movement to implement certain ideals that that particular friend is only just beginning to get some glimmering of an idea about. And here you're asking him to sacrifice himself for those ideals, to take less money for the sake of those ideals. It's not reasonable.

S: Well it shouldn't.

: Where?

: In a co-op with Mitras and most people that aren't Mitras are almost taking the responsibility that an Order member should be taking.

S: Well that's OK if they do it voluntarily, but if someone has not expressed a definite commitment in one way or another he should not be a co-op member.

: So a beginner, a Friend that comes along and commits himself to that freely almost takes full responsibility of the work situation, becomes a co-op member. He is still only a Friend but he's fully committed himself to that?

S: Well you can't commit yourself to the co-op situation without committing yourself to more than the co-op situation because the co-op just doesn't exist for the sake of the co-op. It exists for [62] the sake of the whole Movement or at least for the sake of a Part of that Movement. As for instance when part of the purpose of the co-op is to make some money for the nearest centre, so you don't therefore just commit yourself to the co-op when you are a member of the co-op but to the centre. So that means you must have some feeling for that centre, for which through the co-op you are trying to make money. You must have some feeling for what that centre is doing. Not simply a commitment to the co-op as a limited separate entity.

: New people or Friends that come along really get inspired quite quickly and want to put themselves straight into a situation and they do and those situations are usually open to them.

S: I would say that if someone comes along and that he is really in a position to commit themselves to the co-op in the full sense I say they are probably ready to be ordained!

: Certainly you might be committed to the work and all that but they may not have the vision and see the co-op in its overall perspective as part of the Movement, as part of the centre in fact. So in many respects co-op managers I think should... It's a very committed responsible position and maybe they ought perhaps to be Order members who have that vision of what the co-op is for and (?).

S: Otherwise you see... well you've got all these extra earnings why should we give it to the centre? Let's do something else with it. let's all have a holiday, let's all buy a TV set.

: (?) Sukhavati. Fifty percent of members of the co-operative down there are non order members.

: Members not employed... ?

: (? It's quite dangerous.

S: But that is not necessarily met by making people co-op members as distinct from employees or workers, otherwise you really do weaken the situation. It's almost like having non Order members in the Order so to speak although that is a contradiction in terms but then going back - having a co-op member who is not fully a member, who is not a co-op member.

: It's not even fair to expect people (,to function in that way?).

S: Well if they do it's not fair to them. If they don't it's not fair to the co-op. Anyway it's teatime now. We got a long way from the Buddha's enlightenment but maybe not so far in a sense.

Next section please.

"Just as a city gate fixed in the earth is not shaken by the wind from the four directions, even so do I declare to be a good man he who thoroughly perceives the noble truths. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace."

[63]

S: So what is the subject matter, really, of this verse. In one word would you say? What particular quality of a person or of an individual, of the good man?

: Strength?

S: Strength, yes.

: Solidity.

S: Solidity, yes.

: Stability.

S: Stability. But another word which includes all this but adds something.

: Consistency?

S: Consistency.

: Stalwartness.

S: Stalwartness (Laughter)

: Unreactive.

S: Unreactive - ah we're getting near now but a better sort of word. Imperturbability. It's the quality represented among the five Buddhas by Akshobhya, the Immovable, the Unshakeable. So here it says, 'Just as the city gate fixed in the earth is not shaken by the wind from the four directions, even so, do I declare to be a good man', a true man, a real man you could say, 'who thoroughly perceives the noble truths. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace.'

The term for city gate is 'indakhilo' - no one really knows what that means. It literally means Indra's post. Some of the commentators say that it refers to a big post, sunk into the earth near a city gate but they can't explain why it should be sunk there. This translation has city gate but there's nothing about a city and nothing about a gate. It's Indra's post or Indra's pillar. I sometimes wonder whether it's anything to do with a sacrificial post from ancient times. It could be. But whatever the actual origin of the term may be the significance is of a pillar or post sunk deep into the earth so that it's completely immovable, does not stir, does not stir in

the wind or for any other reason, and the Is appurisal the real man, is compared with that and he's like that, one is like that in as much as he perceives the noble truths, the aryasatyas. Everybody knows what they are the four noble truths I take it. I don't think I need to go over those except to remark - something I mentioned in the Survey, that one must not take the formula of the four truths as an end in itself. It's important to remember that the four noble truths represent a particular application of the principle of conditionality. Because the first two truths, suffering and its cause, represent the reactive type of conditionality, and the second pair, the third and the fourth, that is to say the cessation of suffering with the way leading to the cessation of suffering, represent the spiral type of conditionality.

So it's important first of all to get into one's mind the idea of conditionality, the two kinds of conditionality, the reactive and the creative or the cyclical and the spiral and to see the first as embodied in the first two truths and the second as embodied in the second two truths. Otherwise one just [64] loses sight of the raison d'etre of the four noble truths. You just take it as a formula which is almost an end in itself which is what is usually done in the Buddhist world. So an understanding of the four noble truths is actually a form of insight, a real deep understanding of the four noble truths, and it's only that insight that can give the individual the quality of unshakeability, of imperturbability. Unless you develop insight you are always liable to go up and down. Your mood can change. You can be affected, however positive you may be, if it's only a mundane positivity you can be dragged down if circumstances change.

Do you understand this distinction between insight and what I called mundane positivity which includes of course the experience of the dhyana states. So it involves understanding the distinction between vipassana on the one hand, actual insight into reality, and samatha on the other which is simply the enjoyment of higher super conscious states which are still mundane but which provide a basis for the development of insight. So a dhyana experience can be gained and it can be lost. Everybody knows that. You can have a wonderful meditation maybe in the morning, and maybe in the evening you are in the depths of despair. Your mood, your experience has completely changed. There's no stability, there's no consistency. So why is that? It's because of the absence of insight. So it's only when insight is really developed and it's developed to any extent only when you become a stream entrant, it is only then that you get real unshakeability or imperturbability. Otherwise you are liable to go up and down emotionally speaking, all the time.

So the person who is being talked about here, the good man, the sappurisa, I mean good man is very, very weak, the sappurisa, the true man, the real man, the individual, he is declared unshakeable because he has an actual perception of the four noble truths. I am just trying to see what the term is here - 'Ipassati' - he sees. He sees them. Insight is implied not just a theoretical understanding.

So you will find this sort of person also only in the Sangha. This sort of person exists within the spiritual community, that is to say the person who is an individual to such an extent that he has developed insight, insight specifically into conditionality, into the four noble truths and who on account of that insight has become a true individual and cannot be shaken, is imperturbable just like a great post sunk in the ground. It's very important to understand in what this imperturbability consists. I think there are two possible misunderstandings to be guarded against. one is that you think of imperturbability in the stoic sense, at least the popular understanding of the stoic sense. That is to say you just grit your teeth and try not to feel, sort of grinning and bearing it. That is one misunderstanding. The other which may derive from this comparison of the pillar sunk in the ground if you are not careful, is rigidity or inflexibility. It is not that which the text has in mind here. What do you think is the difference between the genuine unshakeability of a true individual in the midst of circumstances and the stoic impassivity or even rigidity. What is the real difference?

: (?)

S: Yes, but you are just using the contrary metaphor. He is not rigid because he's flexible. In what does that flexibility consist?

[65]

: it's a bit like feeling equanimity in metta. Presumably (it 's something that can be developed in all situations? You're not particularly charmed by one in preference to the other)

: It's an opening rather than a... rigidity implies holding back, shutting your self off, cutting yourself off from everything else.

S: Well the stoic impassivity suggests that. You just manage to maintain your own individuality by shutting everything out and trying not to feel it, trying not to let it affect you in that sort of way. So the true unshakeability doesn't exclude being in touch with what is happening, even experiencing things, especially experiencing other people. But rigidity implies a sort of predetermined pattern to which you adhere. When you're rigid the unshakeability is not really in you. You are actually quite shaky, so you take fast hold of some particular pattern of behaviour or thought and you adhere firmly to that. This is what rigidity consists in. A rigid person has not got this sort of unshakeability. A rigid person is really very brittle. So they identify very strongly with set opinions or set modes of behaviour. It's that which gives the impression of rigidity. But really they're very weak because they're having to be propped up by those set patterns all the time, those particular structures.

: ? not rooted to the ground.

S: Yes you could say if you are like the pillar and if you take that at all literally you are rooted in the ground, yes, but you're not really affected or disturbed. Do you think that is really possible. In what sense is it possible? One must think clearly about these things. It's insight that gives you the real unshakeability, so what does that mean? Does it mean that you're always going to have a happy time? Does it mean that you are not going to suffer?

: No, but you won't be so affected by it.

S: You won't be so affected by it. Maybe one can make this clear with an example from the life of the Buddha. There's an incident, I think it's in the Mahaparinibbana sutta where the Buddha is talking to Ananda and he says that his body is in constant pain and it is only when he withdraws into the dhyana state that his body is free from pain. So what is the situation? After all the Buddha is enlightened so does he lose his enlightenment when he suffers pain?

: It's not that he doesn't feel it but he doesn't react to the feeling.

S: He doesn't react to it, yes. He doesn't become the occasion for the development of any unskilful thought, any unskilful mental process, but he feels the pain. So you can say that on account of his insight, on account of his fully developed insight, his enlightenment, the Buddha, even when he experiences pain does not produce any unskilful mental state or process, but if he remains in the kamaloka sphere of consciousness so to speak then he has to or he may be liable to experience physical suffering. If he has a bodily consciousness, as part of that bodily [66] consciousness he may experience painful feelings connected with the body, just because he is old, but that does not affect his enlightenment experience. Because his insight is constant. But unless he withdraws from consciousness of the body altogether, in other words experiences a dhyana state above the first dhyana, then he suffers physically. Do you see the situation? You can have insight associated with happiness, you can also have insight associated with the experience of suffering, but if you have developed insight and you experience say bodily happiness your insight is not affected by the bodily happiness And in the same way if you experience physical pain, your insight is not affected by the physical pain. You experience the physical pain but you do not react in an unskilful manner on account of that experience of the physical pain. For instance supposing you have developed insight and somebody attacks you and wounds you and you suffer seriously, you experience the suffering. The fact that you have developed insight does not exempt you from experiencing the suffering but you do not experience the usual emotional reactions in the form of anger, hatred etc., etc.

The chances are also you may suffer less even in the ordinary sense. You suffer the bare physical sensation but not the unskilful mental states which usually arise in connection therewith and which would usually make the situation worse, make the actual suffering worse. Do you see what I mean?

So it's insight which gives the imperturbability. If you are in your ordinary state of consciousness, that is to say some state of consciousness in which there's no insight, you can be just buffeted all the time,

: Does that mean that an enlightened person wouldn't mind whether he was suffering or whether he wasn't?

S: In a sense he wouldn't mind. In a sense. He would prefer or you could say his organism would prefer not to suffer because that is the natural tendency of the organism. But he would not as it were shield it from suffering at the expense of developing an unskilful mental state. That would not be possible.

: ? like the Buddha refers to his last illness?

S: Yes it portends to those days yes.

: is it also (? that you might be able to experience higher dhyanic states when you're in some sort of physical pain?

S: Well, the Buddha in this instance made the comment that He was free from physical pain only when He withdrew into a higher dhyana state. It must be remembered that the Buddha was very practised, very skilled in meditation and it was not very difficult for him to ascend into a dhyana state. Usually we find it difficult to ascend into a dhyana state even when the body is quite comfortable but if we were experiencing physical suffering, if we were practised in meditation it would be possible with or without insight to withdraw into a higher meditative state in which we no longer felt the physical suffering but that would presume, or assume, two things: one that we were sufficiently skilled in meditation anyway to be able to do that in that sort of situation and two, that the physical pain itself was not so overpowering, not so strong that we would not be able to concentrate sufficiently to rise into that dhyana state anyway. But the great advantage of the dhyana state, the samatha state [67] apart from the fact that it is intensely pleasurable etc., is it provides the basis for the development of insight - and it is only the insight that represents so to speak a permanent achievement. The samatha experience can be lost; even an enlightened person with a fully developed insight does not necessarily dwell in a higher state of consciousness all the time, the vipassana is always there but the higher dhyana states are not necessarily always there as we can see from that incident from the Buddha's life. There are no actual unskilful mental states present in the mind of a Buddha but when his mind is occupied with bodily things, then his consciousness becomes liable to the experience of suffering through the body. It is as though you can't have it both ways; if you remain in the body consciousness you are liable to experience sensations of pleasure or pain and you can avoid those only by withdrawing from the body consciousness altogether. It also suggests that bodily consciousness can be ethically neutral; bodily consciousness is not necessarily unskilful. The fact that you are experiencing visual forms through the eyes, that you are 'i - 0 hearing sounds through the ears is in itself neither skilful nor unskilful, this is neutral. It is not that the senses or sense perception are evil or bad, or unskilful in themselves, No they are not; they are quite neutral. But you can direct your eye to a certain visual object and that process in itself is neutral but in connection with the object you perceive a skilful or unskilful mental state may arise; in connection with the object that you see, a mental state of craving may arise or a mental state of metta may arise; the one is unskilful the other is skilful. But sense perceptions in themselves are neither skilful nor unskilful. The experience of pleasure or pain through the senses, painful bodily sensations or pleasurable bodily sensations is in itself neither skilful nor unskilful; the skilfulness or unskilfulness arises in respect of the mental reaction. This comes back to what we were saying yesterday about the enjoyment of food; you can actually experience a pleasurable

sensation, a pleasurable, gustatory or olfactory sensation when eating food without giving rise to an unskillful mental state, i.e. a state of greed, attachment and so on, that is possible. It is perhaps comparatively rare, but it's certainly possible.

So it's important to understand that sense consciousness is not evil or unskillful in itself. A Buddha goes on experiencing sense consciousness, He experiences his physical body, He experiences physical objects, He experiences sensations of pleasure as well as sensations of pain but on account of the insight that He has developed his mind is not affected, his mind does not respond by creating unskillful mental states or producing unskillful mental states. Do you see the difference?

: The Buddha is stronger. His mind would respond in a positive way then. Would it not? Like if he saw, someone suffering it would respond to that suffering in a positive way, creative way.

S; Well yes, In a sense there is no question of responding in a positive way because the Buddha's mind you could say is always positive . It's not that he has to develop any special positivity to suit that particular occasion. Whether or not he took action to relieve the suffering would depend upon circumstances.

I think what one must guard against thinking is that when you get enlightened you're always going to be happy. In a sense you are, yes, certainly you are, but that happiness does not exclude the possibility of physical suffering. 'Mental suffering is excluded for obvious reasons but not physical [68] suffering. So long as you have a physical body. As long as you have a physical body then you are susceptible to pleasurable and painful bodily sensations. So you can temporarily withdraw from those by withdrawing into higher dhyana states in which you don't have a body consciousness. As I said with or without the experience of insight. Does this make things clearer or does it make them less clear?

: It makes it a lot clearer.

: Would it make any difference whether he had a body or not? (The Buddha? Because he could withdraw from the body.)

S: Wouldn't make any difference to what?

: The Buddha.

S: : But in what sort of way?

: To his mind.

S: You realize what you're sort of asking in a way. What you're really asking is does the Buddha exist after death which is one of the...

: If he doesn't feel his body any-more, has no sensation that goes into the fourth dhyana, to a higher level of consciousness. He removes himself completely from his body. Then if his body dies or someone comes along () there's that much suffering that it dies, the organism. What happens when you're in a higher state of consciousness. Do you go on from there?

S: Well this is what I said. It becomes one of these four, what are they called, the (Abrakatas?).

: (Unclear?)

S: Because the Buddha says that Buddha, the term Buddha itself means one who has awoken to reality. What reality is cannot really be put into words. You can't really therefore describe the person who has awoken to reality, even during his lifetime. So the Buddha says if even

during his lifetime when his body is there he is indescribable. Not to be described as either existing or not existing, nor both nor neither. Then how much more so is he to be described in that way when the physical body is no longer there.

So you can't describe the Buddha in terms of existence or non existence. You can't sort of pin the Buddha down to being this or that or not being this or that, even when he is as we say alive. But whatever he is or is not there's no change made to it by the disappearance of the physical body. The disappearance of the physical body makes no difference to what the Buddha is. The presence of the physical body makes no difference to what the Buddha is, but what he is we have no means of telling. Do you see what I mean?

: Once he's attained enlightenment and he does leave the body he's not reincarnated in another (body).

S: Well yes this is what is of course said, but one has to realize that to discuss the () question in those terms introduces all sorts of unspoken assumptions. For instance you just spoke of him leaving the body. Well this seems to imply a whole sort of [69] mind/body dualism, which is open to discussion. Do you see what I mean? But it isn't so straightforward as it perhaps looks. So the Buddha usually sort of concludes a discussion of that sort by saying, 'The Tathagata is unfathomable, oh monks, like the great ocean.' But you also can understand that from another point of view one is dealing with an individual, and to the extent that the individual is individual, the individual is incommensurable, that is to say not to be compared with anything else or measured in terms of anything other than individuality.

: Say a Buddha has a physical body - would it be true to say that he suffers or that he in fact really feels just pain but he's not actually suffering. Does that involve a positive mental state.

S: Yes, he feels pain and if one means by suffering dukkha, well this is one kind of dukkha. Physical pain, bodily pain. But if someone sticks a pin into you there is an unpleasant physical sensation, but if you are in a dhyana state, a higher dhyana state, and someone sticks a pin into you, you will not feel it. If you have developed insight to any extent, someone sticks a Din into you, you will feel pain but there will not be any of the usual unskilful mental states that arise in us when we experience physical pain. Do you see what I mean? So that is another possibility. A third possibility is that you have developed insight and at the same time you remain in a higher dhyana state so that then also if there's the experience of, or if something happens which under nominal conditions would create a sensation of bodily pain, you don't feel it.

So there are these three possibilities. The first is that of the ordinary person who experiences say bodily suffering and reacts with unskilful mental states because he hasn't the capacity to rise even to those higher but still mundane dhyana states. The other is the position say of the yogi who can insulate himself say from physical suffering by remaining in higher dhyana states; and the third is that of the person who's developed insight, who whether he is experiencing bodily consciousness and therewith bodily pain, or not, because he's in a higher dhyana state does not generate unskilful mental states on account of the insight which he possesses.

: Insight can only be developed... is it using the dhyana states as a basis?

S: As a basis. There is some discussion not to say dispute in Buddhist circles in the East about the so to speak amount of dhyana experience required. In some circles they try to whittle it down to a momentary experience of the dhyanas, but this is not generally accepted, and it certainly doesn't correspond to my own observation and experience. It is necessary that the whole being should as it were, in my opinion, be thoroughly saturated with dhyana experience before you can begin to develop insight.

But once insight has developed in a sense samatha becomes less important, but until insight is developed samatha is absolutely indispensable.

So the person about whom this verse is speaking is the person who has developed insight, who is unshakeable, not on account of stoic impassivity, nor on account of 'rigidity, but just because he has developed insight and unskilful mental states and insight are not compatible. To be shaken within the context of this verse to be affected in such a way that unskilful mental states arise in you. So your unshakeability doesn't consist in any impassivity or rigidity, but simply in the fact that your mind does not give [70] a foothold any more to unskilful mental states. People can burn you at the stake but you don't respond with unskilful mental states. So this is quite a far cry from the ordinary person's state of mind because most people are in an unskilful mental state much of the time. It's as though they're in a skilful mental state and then something happens and they get into an unskilful mental state - no - much of the people's minds are pervaded by unskilful mental states and certain situations only make things rather worse. You're in a truly positive state usually only when you're enjoying a rather good meditation or when you're just sitting peacefully somewhere with your mind undisturbed, more likely to be in the country than in the city, or when you are doing your work and are fully absorbed in that. I don't say you necessarily experience skilful mental states because you can work in an angry sort of way which certainly gets the work done, but apart from that sort of possibility, very often when you are working you are in a concentrated and skilful mental state.

: You can have insight, not in direct relation to meditation. You might outside the meditation.

S: Well yes and no. Again you see there's an ambiguity in the use of the word meditation. Presumably one means sitting meditation. I mentioned for instance that one can be in a skilful mental state while working and within the Zen tradition there are many instances of monks gaining insight or developing insight while engaged in some very practical occupation within the monastery. Because that practical occupation, whatever it was, that work that they were doing sort of steadied their minds, concentrated their minds. Perhaps they were turning their koan over in their minds at the same time, and then that flash of insight developed. So even though sitting meditation is important, especially for the beginner, and it does seem that you're more likely to develop insight on the basis of meditation developed during the sitting meditation period, nonetheless the possibility of your developing insight on other occasions when you are concentrated for one reason or another, can't be ruled out. It doesn't have to be a very high level of concentration. Access concentration as it's technically called is all that is required. But if you have as it were a history of meditative experience then even though you're only in a state of access concentration your whole being will have been integrated and purified by the previous samatha experience, and will be more ready to develop insight. So insight can arise when you're at the workbench, when you're drawing water. One notices in the case of these Zen stories these flashes of insight that arise in connection with ordinary everyday occupations usually arise in connection with quite simple straightforward things pounding rice which you do hour after hour after hour or drawing water or chopping wood. If you are having to occupy your mind with electronic gadgetry which kept your mind very busy it's very unlikely that insight would arise. I mean the actual instances which are given usually occur in connection with these very simple basic activities which keep the body occupied, which keep the lower mind busy so to speak, which leaves the greater part of the mental energies free. Because chopping wood - you have to concentrate a bit to do it properly but it doesn't absorb all your mental energies. You might even say that packaging beans is a very sort of favourable situation for the development of insight. There you are, just your hands are occupied just as though you are telling your beads, not intellectually demanding. I shouldn't say, I mustn't say even a woman could do it or anything like that but it isn't intellectually demanding! It's going on in a rhythmical sort of way and your mind is free, not to wander because [71] after all you have got something to do, But just to ponder on things as it were. So insight could be developed under those circumstances. But if the job is rushing here and there, having to think a lot, plan a lot, foresee, keep tabs on a number of different things happening at the same time, that sort of situation is not favourable to developing insight, definitely not.

: it would seem that when insight is developed it in a sense is a flash, you say. But are there any sort of real prerequisites to developing insight. I mean apart from the skilful mental

states.

S: Well, yes traditionally, in Buddhist terms, there needs to be some acquaintance with the conceptual framework of the teaching. For instance in the Theravada, inasmuch as it reflects early, Buddhist teaching, great importance is attached to understanding the three characteristics, that everything is impermanent, that everything is liable to suffering, that noting mundane is ultimately satisfactory, and nothing mundane has got any sort of unchanging soul-essence. So the usual procedure is that one is familiar with these ideas already, but just as ideas. But when you are in a state of highly concentrated skilfulness, when you're not merely in a skilful mental state but in a skilful mental state of a high degree of concentration. I use the word concentration in the same way as you use it when you speak of a concentrate of something. The sort of concentrate of skilfulness, that is your mental state, and then in that state, where you're still capable of mental activity you just recall those things which you just understand theoretically or intellectually, and because your whole being is more concentrated and because there's a greater energy therefore behind your thinking, you can actually develop insight, or you can transform your previous theoretical understanding into a real understanding, and the final, the proof if you like that theoretical understanding has become real understanding or insight, is that there is an actual change in you. That's the only proof, that's the only way of knowing, If you have just a sort of flash but you're just the same person afterwards well you can only say perhaps it was a genuine insight but it was so weak as not really to count as an insight. So when you're just emotionally carried away while listening to a lecture, that is not necessarily an insight. Some people listen to lectures and get emotionally carried away all their life, and never develop insight and never change. But if for instance you really see, for instance that everything is impermanent, well gradually you'll be incapable of behaving in such a way that suggests that you believe that everything is permanent.

And very often you may have to direct your attention in this more concentratedly skilful state, to certain situations in your own life, and review those, and just look back and see what you did and why you did it, and you can then get a deeper insight into why you did that, that you can see very clearly that it was motivated by an unskilful mental state, and that's why you landed yourself into that particular situation and it's happened so much, and then you'll really convince yourself - I must not behave like that, I don't want to go through all that again, and that will sink in and change your whole attitude and behaviour, which means that, yes, it was a genuine insight. But insight really means a degree of understanding so deep that it actually modifies your whole being, your whole character, your whole character structure, your way of looking at things, your way of behaving. You actually do become changed or transformed. So the way in which you can tell whether insight has developed is that you've been transformed without the possibility of falling back. Sometimes people change for just a little [72] while and then circumstances change, they get back into their old habits. But the test is that if it was really insight the change is permanent. You can never go back.

: Does that mean that insight perceived in the (.greed?) unclear?

S: To the extent that it is actually insight you can't fall back. but it's very difficult to tell sometimes when you've got a very strong and clear theoretical understanding or weak insight. Do you see what I mean. There's a sort of indistinct shadowy region where one merges into the other, but if you don't actually change to any extent at all then you have to conclude well I just understood that theoretically, or if you do actually change well you can conclude - and you don't fall back - then you conclude it really was insight. But we know in the case of some people, maybe in our own case, that you can go through a certain round of experience and say to yourself 'I'm never going to go through all that again' but you do, four and five times again! Just like before, so that means you haven't developed any real insight into that situation, because had you developed insight, a sufficient degree of insight at least, it would have been sufficient to safeguard you from going through the round of that particular experience again.

: It's at most as though the experience of suffering is not sufficient in any one to develop insight, that is have the experience of the cause of it.

S: Yes, right, yes, yes.

: and analyse that out.

S: Otherwise the classic illustration is given us. The woman who has a baby and she has a very difficult delivery and she says 'I'm never going to have another baby again, never', but a year later she's pregnant again. She's forgotten all about the suffering, and you can forget. You can forget, well you can forget your past suffering, you can forget your past enjoyment also. In a way the insight is the only constant factor. If you develop insight you don't forget, it's impossible for you to forget what it is that you've had insight into, because it's become part of your own being. If you've only had a theoretical understanding of it it is possible for you to forget it. Of course you can forget the terms of the insight, but you will not forget the insight itself. For instance if you get old and your memory may go. You might have developed insight when you were younger, but as you get old your memory may go and you may not remember any more the five of this and the six of the other, but the insight which is conceptually expressed in terms of the five of this and the six of that, that insight will remain. But normally you can remember the Buddha's teaching without having an insight into it, and that doesn't help you very much. The chances are if you encounter a difficult situation you'll forget all about that teaching. But if you've developed insight you can't because the insight means that it's become a part of your being itself.

: When you say degrees of insight could you say insight into mundane existence and insight into reality?

S: Yes, well this is in technical terms the distinction between insight into the conditioned and insight into the unconditioned. [73]

I know the Mahayana attitude is, or the Mahayana point of view is that if you go very deeply into the conditioned, if you have deep insight into the conditioned, you will as it were come out on the other side, and enter into or have insight into the unconditioned. Because the distinction between conditioned and unconditioned according to the Mahayana is a sort of mental construction. It's just a part of our way of categorizing, dealing with, existence. It's not a distinction which inheres in reality, according to the Mahayana. So the more you go beyond the limitations of the ordinary thinking mind, the more you'll go beyond all such distinctions, and no longer see things in terms of conditioned and unconditioned.

But going not quite so far as that, yes as one develops the insight into the conditioned, and as one goes deeper still, one encounters, as it were on the other side of the conditioned, the unconditioned and develops insight into that. The one leads on into the other, But one important aspect of insight is not being misled by words, and most people are misled by words quite clearly. A lot of the questions are questions about words actually, but they're not realized as questions about words. People think that they're asking questions about things or even realities, but they're actually only questions about words.

So the true individual here is the one who is envisaged as remaining constant, under changing conditions. He's not as I said impassive or rigid. He responds to situations as they arise, but there is never any element of reactivity or unskillfulness in his response. The skillfulness remains constant because the insight remains constant. Insight by its very nature is constant.

So the person who has insight by his very nature is constant too. So 'This precious jewel is in the Sangha.' You get this kind of person in the Sangha, in the spiritual community.

: You said in the Sangha. Thinking of this, just seeing (into) the mundane. Do you feel that maybe quite a lot of people sometimes have certain experiences they just see suffering and it might change them. They wouldn't necessarily be in contact with the Sangha.

S: I think this does sometimes happen. It's very difficult though to tell whether people in that sort of situation do actually have an experience of insight howsoever weak, or just a

theoretical understanding which is rather clearer than usual. But this raises the whole question of how the whole process of the higher evolution proceeds, which raises the whole question of the nature of man himself. It does seem that the instrument, though only the instrument, perhaps not the only instrument but certainly an indispensable instrument of the higher evolution is conceptual. It's as though we sort of haul ourselves up by means of a conceptual understanding. It's as though you have to have a conceptual understanding first, and then transform that conceptual understanding with the help of meditation or something corresponding to meditation, transform it into an actual insight. But it's rather as though if we haven't got that sort of conceptual framework, then we aren't able to sort of take a grasp on reality, we don't get any sort of foothold. Even though of course eventually we have to throw away the conceptual framework, It's as though if we're to really take hold of reality or to develop insight, we've got to have some language in which to talk about these things before we can do anything about realizing them. Do you see what I mean? And we get that from the tradition, we get that from the spiritual community, because that's where we encounter the tradition,

So because in the case of human beings the rational mind [74] seems to be the growing point usually, Unless we've got some sort of conceptual apprehension of things we've no means of knowing what it is that we have to do, in which direction so to speak, we have to go. So we find say in the case of Buddhism, at the beginning of the tradition there is the Buddha, with his experience of enlightenment, but the Buddha's got to communicate that, he's got to get people sort of heading in that direction, but how is he to do that? Because there the Buddha is enlightened and there ordinary people are unenlightened so how is he going to give them any sort of intimation about it at all? He's got to get them practising. He's got to get them practising ethics, practising meditation, developing wisdom etc., etc. How is he going to get them to do this? Because there's a great gulf between the enlightened one and the unenlightened one. He's got to communicate with them and communicate in such a way that they are persuaded or impelled to move in the direction of enlightenment. So the only way in which he can persuade or impel them or the majority of them, is so to speak, to convince them. By presenting them with a sort of coherent, rational structure which points or leads in the direction of enlightenment, and this is what we call the Dharma. Hence the Buddha speaks in terms of conditionality, the two kinds of conditionality etc., etc. He throws that sort of conceptual bridge across that gulf separating the enlightened mind from the unenlightened mind.

So unless some sort of conceptual framework or unless that sort of conceptual bridge is there you've no means of progressing, because there's nothing for your mind to take hold of, nothing for your mind to grasp, and it's as a result of your mind grasping something that you pull yourself along.

But at the same time of course Buddhism as strongly emphasizes that the conceptual constructions what I've called the bridge, is only a means to an end. It's to change the metaphor, just a raft. The degree of conceptual elaboration that is required by any given person varies immensely of course. There are a lot of people who won't stir a foot until you've spelled out the whole of Buddhist philosophy. But there are others who on the basis of a quite simple, straightforward explanation, are prepared to put all their energies into it, They tend to be more what we call faith types. That is the difference between the doctrine follower and the faith follower. The doctrine follower is a person with a much more active mind who requires a much more detailed theoretical exposition or explanation to get him started practically, whereas the faith follower is someone who requires a minimum of theoretical explanation.

: Would those two people be people of different approaches? The faith follower perhaps going more by his emotions,

S: The faith follower goes more by his emotions. The faith follower is more likely to get started than the doctrine follower because he's satisfied with a very simple straightforward theoretical explanation, But I was going to say that he's more likely to go off in the wrong direction. It just depends what explanation he's presented with. Many Christians, especially

the more militant ones are faith followers; you could say, or at least if they'd encountered Buddhism they would have been faith followers but having encountered Christianity they've been sent off in the wrong direction, 'Faith is very strong in them, intelligence is not. So they certainly do something, they certainly move in a direction but unfortunately it's a direction that Buddhism doesn't regard as the right one. I was going to say that the faith follower is more likely to move off in the wrong direction but on second thoughts I'm not so sure of that. That is they're more [75] likely to go off in the wrong direction than the doctrine follower. I think nowadays the doctrine follower is likely to take much longer to get started than the faith follower but even when he does get started under modern conditions it seems., he's no more likely to go in the right direction than the faith follower, because there are so many micchaditthis for him to follow. Do you see what I mean? S the situation seems to have got worse, If you're a faith follower you get started pretty soon and either go in the right or the wrong direction. If you're a doctrine follower it merely means your starting is delayed but you're equally likely to go either in the 'right or the wrong direction,

So Buddhism attaches great importance to a sort of correct theoretical understanding of life in the first place because that is to say an understanding of the Dharma intellectually because Buddhism teaches that that theoretical construction or elaboration which we call the Dharma, or which is one aspect of the Dharma was devised by the Buddha, in, other words an enlightened being, as a sort of bridge in the sense that I've described, between the enlightened and the unenlightened mind, If you take an example. Say how are you to know the mind of Shakespeare? You only know the mind of Shakespeare by seeing or reading Shakespeare's plays. So in the same way, you can only know the mind of the Buddha, which is the enlightened' mind, through the teaching. That is the only way that you can approach it. Though just as Shakespeare's plays are the bridge that Shakespeare as it were throws between his mind and his audience, so that the audience has access to his mind so to speak, in the same way the Dharma is the bridge thrown by the Buddha between the unenlightened and the enlightened mind, so that unenlightened people have the possibility of approaching the Buddha's enlightenment,

So this is why it's important to understand that the Buddha's teaching is not a philosophy in the academic sense thought up for purely rational reasons, Its an attempt by an enlightened person to communicate the nature of his experience to those who are not enlightened in such a way that they can be motivated to try to develop that same enlightened state of mind for themselves, So this is why sometimes it's said that the Buddha is supposed to have said, 'I teach only suffering and the cessation of suffering'. In other words my object is strictly practical. Don't take only suffering and the cessation of suffering too literally. Perhaps one should say, 'I teach only conditionality' or 'I teach only cyclical and spiral conditionality', 'I teach only the reactive mind and the creative mind'. How to avoid the one and cultivate the other. The Buddha is not concerned to reveal the nature of existence as such, or only to reveal it to the extent that it throws light on the process of gaining enlightenment, The Buddha is not a scientist or a philosopher in the ordinary sense.

All right let's go on to verse nine.

"Those who comprehend clearly the Noble Truths Well taught by him who is endowed, with, profound wisdom, However exceedingly heedless they may be, Do not take birth for the eighth time. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace.

S: So those who comprehend clearly the Noble Truths, well taught by him who is endowed with profound wisdom. This is important in view of what we've just been saying. The noble truths are not a purely or they don't represent a purely rational or sort of scientific, philosophical approach. They are taught by the Buddha, [76] taught by one who is endowed with profound wisdom or 'Gambhira panna sudesatani' the text says, This is important, The Four Noble Truths represent a communication' to the unenlightened by one of profound wisdom, that is to say one who is actually enlightened. A communication which is intended to help them to move in the direction of that profound wisdom themselves.

So 'those who comprehend clearly the Noble Truths taught, well taught by him who is endowed with profound wisdom, however exceedingly heedless they may be, do not take birth for the eighth time.' Now it's important to understand this, So what does this mean? It means in very simple doctrinal terms, it means once you've entered the stream according to standard Buddhist teaching, Theravada and Mahayana alike a certain spiritual momentum is set up as a result of which you will not be reborn on earth more than seven times.

: Can that be taken literally?

S: Well it is taken literally usually,. If it isn't taken literally well how do you take it?

: Perhaps such as is in the case of the Bodhisattva who might want to come back more than seven times,

S: Yes, but there is coming back and coming back. (Laughter) the implication or even the assumption here is that you will not come back as a result of a residue of karmas which have still to be experienced. You will not come as the result of your samskaras. If you come back so to speak as a Bodhisattva out of compassion which is I was going to say a skilful mental state but it's not even a skilful mental state, it's more than a skilful mental state in the ordinary sense. It's a spontaneous expression of your enlightenment experience, well that does not count as a coming back under the law of karma in this sense. In other words this is saying that there will not be more than seven lives as a result of previous karmas. If you come back voluntarily that's another matter, that doesn't enter into consideration here. That is in any case a Mahayana teaching not a Theravada teaching. But even so can one take the seven lives literally or not? and if one isn't to take them literally well, how is one to take them? If one believes in a series of lives, well, you can say one, two, three, four, Is there a fixed number that you go through after having entered the stream?

: It also says 'on earth'. Does it exclude the possibility of being born any more times let's say in heaven?

S: No. This refers to coming back within the three worlds.

: I thought it just referred to earth and that you did come back more times in other lokas,

S: No, because having become a stream entrant you progress to being a (Sakadagami), one who only comes back once. Then you progress to being an Anagami who doesn't come back to this earth, but the Anagami still comes back to the Suddhavasa. But having become an Arhant he doesn't come back even to the Sudhavasa. He remains as it were in Nirvana. He does not come back at all.

So when it is said that once you have attained Stream Entry you will not come back more than seven times it means to a rebirth anywhere within the mundane, on any level. So the question still arises 'why seven?' To me of course the number seven is [77] itself so to speak auspicious. Because it seems to be a symbolical number, but on the other hand we mustn't sort of refuse to take things literally when they can be taken literally. we don't always want to run (?) a symbolical explanation of everything because it's almost like trying to explain it away because if it's to be taken literally well then you're really up against hard facts which have to be taken into consideration. But it's important to understand the process because when you enter the stream, according to the standard Theravada teachings which may be a slight elaboration of what the Buddha has himself actually said, when you enter the stream of course you enter the stream by virtue of your having developed a powerful insight, and this insight is sufficient to break the first three fetters, So that means that a portion of the reactive mind is as it were cut off, and it is after all the reactive mind which brings you back in a manner of speaking again and again into conditioned existence, Now the point is that once you've set going this process of the higher evolution in the Transcendental sense it can only gather momentum. That is the point. It can only gather momentum. This is the point of saying that there cannot be more than seven more rebirths. Because if it did not gather momentum there

could be any number of births remaining after stream entry had actually been achieved. It was as though you were in exactly the same position that you were before gaining stream entry, except that you have gained stream entry. But you're not in exactly the same position except that you have gained stream entry. You've not only gained stream entry well you've entered the stream! and the stream is a stream. You've gone from the bank into the stream. It's not that you've gone further over the bank. You've now entered into a different element so to speak, which actually carries you forward. it could be said without further effort but, no, that would create some confusion and misunderstanding. Because this is all - but don't forget you are the stream . You don't remain unchanged and just dip in the stream, You have changed yourself into a stream and the nature of a stream is to flow. You've set off within yourself a sort of chain reaction which just goes on increasing, not arithmetically but geometrically to such an extent that the point when it'll no longer be possible for you to return at all, when for you conditioned existence will no longer be repeated, can actually be calculated as only seven more lives ahead.

Why seven? Well if one is asked that well either it can actually be calculated or it can be just known from experience.

: I wonder if there will be any relationship to the fact that the stream entrant (?) certain fetters.

S: It could be that but then the fetters are not correlated with particular lives because you can break any number of fetters in any number of lives under eight. For instance you become a stream entrant in this life but you don't have seven lives remaining because you've got seven fetters, because you can break, you can go on to break all the remaining seven in this life itself. Otherwise you could never become an Arhant from being a completely unenlightened man in one life whereas it's the universal Buddhist teaching that you can. So the number of fetters remaining cannot be correlated with number of births remaining.

: That's looking at it with one way but looking at it in another way perhaps the momentum is such that you will [78] at least...

S: Well that is what is said.

: ... getting rid of the last five.

: But the last five, even the last five aren't broken by a Non Returner, so your argument breaks down.

: But that's sort of trying to tie it in a ... but what I'm suggesting is the momentum is that the slowest you could ever do it would still be... If you wanted to make one (lunge?) at least get...

S: Yes, well you can do it any way you pleased. You could get rid of one in each of the seven remaining or you could get rid of them all in the seventh life, or all in this life. So this is perhaps the meaning of when it says, 'However exceedingly heedless they may be.' Even if having entered the stream you are as it were careless and don't make any further effort in this life, it doesn't mean that you lose out in the long run, because it's as, though you've set up a momentum which cannot be prevented from increasing.

: However exceedingly heedless they may be.

S: Well this is what is says. It also means... also again one mustn't take this too literally because when that sort of momentum has been set up there's a definite limit placed on how heedless you can be. Do you see what I mean?

: Seven's the average number.

S: (Laughs)

: Is there any connection between the eight individuals and the eight lifetimes, that maybe they're thinking...

S: No. No it's not more than seven. There cannot be an eighth.

: That's once they've reached stream entry.

S: But in the end that is quite a thought, isn't it, that you don't fall back because when you attain the point of stream entry it's not that you come to a certain static point. Stream entry does not represent that. It rather represents the sparking off of a process which from then onwards generates spontaneously an increasing momentum, even without anything further being done, but of course this, if we go into it at all deeply, this makes us question our whole literalistic way of looking at things. The point of stream-entry is the point at which you move from the circle to the spiral. In a sense you are making an effort. In a sense you are not making an effort. It's as though ... let's say that in your personality when you start off there's an enormous excess of reactivity over creativity. Maybe there's an absolute-minimum of creativity, just barely enough to-make you a human being at all. But as, a result of your spiritual practise the proportion of creativity in relation to reactivity is constantly increasing. But the reactivity remains very powerful. So let us say that when the creativity is still, or so long as the creativity is still very much less than [79] reactivity, whatever the actual proportions may be, there is always the possibility of the reactivity stifling the creativity. Do you see what I mean? Even continuing to stifle it. But let us say that once the creativity is proportionate to the reactivity, from that point onward the reactivity, hasn't a chance. So if that is so, if it is when they're half and half or even maybe let us say, we can't be sure of this - when say the creativity is three quarters and the reactivity only one quarter, then there is no possibility of the reactivity ever overpowering the creativity again, The reactivity in you is inevitably finished with in a limited time which can be calculated from the rate at which the creativity is increasing and that is the point of no return. Do you see what I mean? So it's something like that which the verse is saying.

: When you speak about reactivity, people set up routines in their day to day existence to sort of make things easier and set patterns they get up at the same time and like they catch the same bus to work and things like that. Is that reactive or what?

S: Well is it? If you do it you should be able to tell whether it is reactive or not. How do you tell whether something that you are doing is reactive or is creative? or do you just have to take it on trust?

: To the extent that it's done with awareness.

S: It's to the extent that it's done with awareness.

: Because such situations described could equally be quite creative.

S: You are not necessarily being reactive because you do the same thing over and over again or appear to do the same thing over and over again. For instance supposing you meditate every morning you don't or you shouldn't sit down and meditate every morning with a sort of mental attitude, 'well here we go again, same old meditation, same old mindfulness of breathing.' You have to bring or try to bring a fresh mind to it, because the situation has changed, you have changed, it's, a different day, it's anew day. It's not that you're doing the same old thing over again. But nonetheless you could say well there is objectively a pattern. So you could say yes, all right, that is in a manner of speaking reactive, but there are two kinds of reactivity again. There is the reactivity which leads to further reactivity, and there's the 'reactivity that leads to creativity. There is a more refined reactivity or shall I say a reactivity which is used as it were with a degree of awareness which points in the direction of the creative. You are as it were using your reactive 'patterns in such a way that they work against themselves, and this applies very much to habit. We are creatures of habit. If we've done something once we tend to do it again. If we do it twice we're more likely to do it a third

time and so on. In that way we build up a habit. So it's as though we have to make use of that tendency within ourselves to build up habits which even though they are habits are in a sense positive. So sitting and meditating regularly is like that. Because it means that you are constantly working on your mind. If you are just to leave it to do it whenever you felt like it you probably wouldn't do it. Most people probably wouldn't. Also there's the question of where to fit it in to the day's

END OF TAPE [80]

routine. So you say, I meditate in the morning, I meditate in the afternoon. Not because there is anything magical about meditating twice a day, but that is the only way for most people to ensure that you meditate at all and that .. ?.. to the constant effort to work on your mind is kept up. When you've got in to a certain momentum and are sure of meditating whatever happens, you don't have to bother so much about particular times and places you will do it anyway. You'll just sit down where you are and do it. you don't have to think in terms of doing it at six in the morning and doing it at eight in the evening. But at the beginning you do, so you make use of your tendency to form habits in such a way that you form good habits. That is to say habits which will lead to the cultivation of more and more skilful mental states.

: A person, say, getting on a bus, would that mean that they, although they're not consciously aware that the bus is sort of coming along and they're getting on and it's quarter past eight, is this, more .. is this the fact that they've moved into that routine so they can think about other things?

S: If, if you've generated a certain momentum you don't necessarily Have to do your meditation, so to speak, at the same time because when you're stepping on a bus is not a skilful time to do your meditation because you might get knocked over or something.

: Oh, I wasn't referring to meditation, I was just, generally reactive and creative minds, is what I was ...

S: Well, in every situation which we encounter there is the possibility of being reactive and there is the possibility of being creative. So, even when you're getting on a bus you can be reactive or you can be creative because at the moment of stepping on the bus you could think "Now what a nuisance, I've got to sit on this bus, with all these ridiculous stupid people for half an hour", you see? You can sometimes get on the bus with that sort of feeling even not consciously formulated. Or you can get on the bus with a positive attitude "I'll be able to sit quietly for half an hour and just collect myself, er? so that when I arrive at my destination I'm rested and collected." You can just remind yourself not to get distracted by anything you might see on the bus or hear on the bus. Yes? Or you might even, some of you make a natural practice when you get on a bus or, any other form of public transport, they sort of mentally wish well to all the people who are already there. You see what I mean? That would be up to a point creative rather than reactive. So at every juncture the possibility exists of being either reactive or being creative. If you're unaware of the existence i of those two possibilities, if you're in a dull sort of mental state then that is reactive and not creative, eh? To begin to be aware that those two possibilities exist all the time, it means already to some extent, that you are creative. [81]

: There is also the point that I think a lot of us lead, live very structured lives. I mean in coops and centres, it does tend to be a very structured life, in this way.

S: I think a structured life is all right on one or two conditions. That is to say the structure, if you remain in it for any length of time must be capable of accommodating all of you. You see what I mean? Let us say, for the sake of argument, that you've got a very strong and intense interest in music, and let us say that that interest in music needs to be developed in the interest of your overall development as a human being. In that case if you've got that need for music in that way the structure in which you are involved must accommodate that particular need. You see what I mean? You can be involved in a structure which doesn't cater for that

particular need for a short while but not for a long while. Because either some part of you which ought to have been developed will permanently be suppressed or else that part, if it's sufficiently strong, will start reacting. It will start asserting its rights so to speak and that will give rise to a feeling of dissatisfaction, discontent and discomfort. So it's a skilful thing to be involved in a tight structure only if that tight structure is providing for all your needs as a growing individual. But there is even another point to be considered. one of your needs as an individual also is to be unstructured. So the structure must provide for gaps in the structure. I remember, in this connection, I read once a science fiction novel - I only read about four or five science fiction novels in my life, but this was one of them. And the scene was set way in the future; the story started in a million years time. By that time, no earth or anything like that existed. But anyway, there's this great city containing millions upon millions of people and apparently, it was all run by a computer who had taken the place of God and that time of course who ever had programmed the computer or whatever you call it, had thought up a perfect structure, everything was perfect, the city was perfect, nothing ever went wrong except what was programmed to go wrong, er, because whoever devised the programme realized that if things went on without anything ever going wrong people would deteriorate. So he had planned, he had built into the computer provisions for periodically various things going wrong. And people had to cope with those things and put them right and that would keep them on their toes, as it were, keep them from degenerating. You see what I mean? So in the same sort of way a sensible structure, this is speaking metaphorically, a sensible structure provides for gaps in the structure. Because the people who are functioning within a particular structure need not to be structured sometimes. I think this is also a very deep human need. Because however fully you're catered for in a sense, you know that unstructured part of you, that part that wants to be spontaneous, and free to get up one morning, and not have anything which is there ready to be done in that sort of structured way. When you can do anything, you can either put on a record or go for a walk or you can go and do some work or you can write a letter or you can meditate or you can stay in bed, it's up to you. You need, at least every now and then to be able to have that sort of experience.

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: So in other words it mustn't become too rigid?

S: Well, er, it's not even too rigid. Because even a flexible structure wouldn't be sufficient. It must cease to be a structure altogether sometimes. There must be a complete abeyance of the structure sometimes. What I call a gap in the structure. There must be some occasions on which those who are normally working within that structure, can be completely unstructured; for some people that will be an uncomfortable situation. They won't feel very easy, don't know what to do, get a bit bored. Some people, under these conditions will drift back to the office or workshop and carry on working because they don't know what else to do. They should be prevented from doing that. They should be locked out. Because it means that their capacity for spontaneous living has been atrophied killed off or at least seriously weakened.

I've sometimes thought how difficult it is to persuade people sometimes, anyway within the friends, or some people, just to take a bit of a holiday. They're convinced they can't, yes? So one really has to watch that, especially if they're chairman, but anyway it's time for us to break and have a spontaneous cup of tea or coffee.

'Three conditions are forsaken by him with the acquisition of insight. Namely, one: self illusion; two: doubt and three: the indulgence of rights and ceremonies should there be any. He is also absolutely freed from the four states of misery and is incapable of committing the six crimes. This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace.

S: mmm. We've already dealt with those three fetters and the way in which they're breaking these to enter in the stream or is tantamount to entering the stream. Insight here is 'dassana' which is the Sanskrit 'darsana', 'vision' one can say. The translation is a bit curious here, 'the indulgence in rights and ceremonies' should there be any? "Should there be any" is not in the text at all, it's just simply

: Should there be any ceremonies?

S: No it means if there do happen to be any ceremonies occurring in your locality, presumably...

: Does that mean, like indulgence?

S: No, it's not indulgence, it's dependence. I pointed out before That this is not rights and ceremonies in the usual English sense. 'Sila' is 'ethics', it's morality. But abbata - religious observances so it's quite strictly ethical precepts or practices and religious observances. It is the dependence upon these, that is to say, the using of them or regarding them as an end in themselves. Because surely the Buddha isn't saying you shouldn't have anything to do with 'Sila' is he? i mean, the Buddha recommends 'sila'. It is the dependence upon 'sila', the regarding of ethics as an end in itself.

: Would 'Sila' at that time meant 'ethics' in a particular Buddhist sense or would it have meant just general behaviour?

S. In the most general sense 'Sila' means 'behaviour', but usually it means 'good behaviour' because 'bad behaviour' is always 'du-sila'. The 'Sila' by itself almost invariably means, except in special compounds, I mentioned for instance lo-dana-silal, the initial meaning of 'Sila' is 'habit', rather than behaviour, or habitual behaviour you could say but the suggestion or the connotation of it is good behaviour, or good habits. But even good habits should not be regarded as ends in themselves, they are means to an end. So one shouldn't become attached or dependant upon any particular pattern of ethical observance or religious practice as an end in itself. This is what the Buddha is getting at. I mean usually when people translate this as not depending on rights and ceremonies' they've got a purely rationalistic objection to the whole, as it were, devotional cum ceremonial side of a spiritual tradition. This is what it is, they are trying to rationalize Buddhism, or make it a purely rational thing, you see what I mean, like some of our friends even in Poona, try to do.

: It seems a strange fetter in some ways, when you first come along it's something that wouldn't trouble you because you can drop religious observances just like that without trouble. But it's something you develop during the spiritual life.

: I don't think that's necessarily the case everywhere else, because we don't have this sort of positive background. We don't have that sort of ethnic religious background either which,...

S: It is true that in India there's a whole tangle, an undergrowth, a jungle of popular religious observances, that people sort of keep up mechanically. So one really has to question the utility of these things. A lot of them may be positively harmful, especially when according to Buddhism, those involve animal sacrifice, or which involve some sort of social discrimination.

: Could it include sort of cultural conventions as well?

S Well, to the extent that cultural conventions are kept up as it were for their own sake just because they always have been kept up, they may or may not have a very positive effect. I think it was, er, Nagabodhi who pointed out last night, that in a positive community not every individual member needed to be aware of the ultimately transcendental orientation of the positive group itself, but if within the positive group there was a spiritual community which remained aware of that ultimate transcendental orientation and kept the positive group oriented in that way that would be sufficient, you see what I mean? So you know, it's rather like that in the case of these conventions. You can keep up various cultural conventions just as it were for the sake of keeping them up, presuming that they're positive in the first place without understanding very deeply what it is all about and can do this in a quite positive manner provided at least some people in the society do really understand what it is all about and why one has even these cultural conventions of a positive nature. But if everybody forgets

well then of course the positive group very rapidly degenerates into something less positive . If for instance everybody in a particular country considers himself or herself Buddhist with more or less degree of justification so that everybody joins in a Wesak celebration, everybody say who helps put up the flags [84] and everybody who helps prepare the food does not necessarily have to understand what actually happens on the Wesak full moon at night and what was meant by the Buddha's attainment enlightenment and so on, it is enough for the purposes of sustaining the positive group as a positive group, it is enough that at least some people within the positive group are more than members of the positive group and understand what did happen on Wesak night, and what the Buddha's enlightenment really means. Do you see what I mean?

: Well, could the positive group remain positive if there wasn't any people in the group who knew what the meaning of it was?

S: No, no, no, a positive group can it seems remain positive, or positively itself can remain positive in the mundane sense that is to say, a positivity which falls short of the transcendental only if there is some awareness of, and ultimate orientation in the direction of the transcendental. Otherwise, you'd no reason, so to speak, even for being positive. There needs to be a transcendental sanction even for ordinary skilful behaviour, otherwise people can see no sense in it, no meaning in it, no purpose in it. Now that's why people need, at least, implicitly if not explicitly a sort of total philosophy of life. They may not understand it in all the details but it has to be there, underlining the whole structure, and at least some people have to know about it or to understand it or to be believed to understand it or to know about it. In some cases it seems to work if people only believe that there are some that understand it.

: That's the problem there is nobody who does ? mundane world.

: In relation to this, the Buddha when he looked down or, the world and saw the world as a bed of lotuses, where some were above, and some below, would that bear any relation to the positive group situation where to some the people might be able to, er...

S: Well yes, well this ties up with something that Lokamitra was saying which was that in India you do have a big positive group. People are emotionally very positive, I think to a greater degree, than they are in this country and I think that in the Buddha's own day that was even more the case. one does get the impression reading the Pali scriptures, which give us a lot of information about India in the Buddha's day, the society was pretty positive and healthy on the whole, it wasn't riddled by guilt, you know, as many people are, or society at large is, say, in the west. People indulged their sort of human desires, they had a good time, they had a happy time, but they were open to the more spiritual dimension of things. So one could say that society in the Buddha's time, in India, did represent a positive group and that in India even now, socially speaking, one does have a group that is largely very positive, mainly I think because their family structure or their type of family structure is much more positive in its effects, than the type of structure that we have here. Here of course we have the nuclear family and that just seems to be a breeding ground for neurosis. [85] In India you still have, so far as most people, most families are concerned the extended family structure of some 10, 12 up to may be 15, 20, 30 people all living under the same roof or set of roofs as an economic and domestic and social unit. There are even several generations. So there is a feeling of emotional cohesion and warmth, and security and people who grow up in that sort of family structure, seem to grow up much more emotionally positive and self confident and free from tension than those who grow up within our nuclear family structures in the west. So this I think, is a very important contributing factor, contributing to the general positivity of the group in India.

: Is it possible for all the people in the positive group to develop, be spiritually aware?

S With ... the fact of the group as a whole, you know, was a positive group, would not mean that everybody within that group was equally positive and that therefore that everybody in that group was equally positive and that therefore that everybody in that group was equally

open to spiritual possibilities. You can find plenty of people in India, even in the positive group who are as individuals, or people let us say, because they're not really individuals, as people, quite closed to any spiritual possibilities, but nonetheless the social structure is such that it tends to generate relatively positive emotional states in the people who live under the influence of that structure. So even those who are individually closed to any spiritual possibilities in their behaviour/ they tend to sustain that sort of positive structure. For instance you might get a woman living in a joint family who has got a very bad temper but she'd never think of setting up a nuclear family. She would support or sustain the extended family structure, which on the whole, even though she was in an unfortunate state, on the whole, would be having a very positive effect upon people. You see what I mean? So in this sort of positive group, the positivity of the positive group is so strong that even those who are individually not very positive have to go along with the positive group and do things in the way of the positive group. But in this country, it's the exact opposite, or in the west, more often than not, it's exactly ..., you may be individually very positive but the group is structured in such a negative unpositive sort of way that you are almost obliged to function in that particular way as you find when you got out into the world and have to work perhaps, you see what I mean?

So I must say, when I went back to India, though it was only a short visit, after an absence of 12 years, having been in England for 12 years, I was really struck by a number of things that I hadn't altogether noticed when I was living in India before. Because don't forget I went out under abnormal circumstances, I went out, first of all I was very young, I was only 18, I hadn't reached my full maturity then you might say (laughter). I was only 18 and I went out in 1944 when in England the country had been at war for 5 years and the war started when I was 14 and only just beginning to think for myself so I'd had 5 years of living in England under very abnormal conditions, that is to say war time conditions, before I went out to India. So I can't say that I really had any knowledge or understanding of life or society in England. [86] I hadn't even started thinking about, I wasn't interested in those things, at that time I was only interested in leading about Buddhism or reading English poetry and history and things of that sort. Contemporary affairs, I hadn't the slightest interest in, I didn't care about it at all. I tried to ignore the war the best I could, I just didn't want to know about the war, I wasn't interested, I just got caught up in it, willy nilly. So then I went to India and, as you know, subsequently I was wondering about India and I stayed in India, uninterruptedly for 18 years. So I knew India very well. I was so familiar with it, not knowing very much of England before I went back to England I wasn't sort of comparing it. In some ways I didn't realize how bad it was. In other ways I didn't realize how good it was but then coming back to England for 12 years, then again returning to India, I appreciated more clearly certain things about India I'd not appreciated before since I was able to compare them with my experiences in England and the thing I think I appreciated most was the general positivity of the social and domestic life compared with the comparative negativity of the social and domestic life over here. I mean their traditional social and domestic life in India where it hadn't been affected by western modes of thought or modern western culture where people are not, themselves, Westernized. They are broadly speaking, on the whole, emotionally much more positive and more stable than people in this country. That was very noticeable. And I noticed the behaviour of women folk seemed so superior to the behaviour, generally, of women over here. It was really very, very noticeable. It was very pleasant to move about in that sort of society where the women behaved decently. You come back here and even within the friends one can't help feeling on many occasions their behaviour is quite disgraceful, quite shameful even, not in their own best interests. So it's very important, the creation of a positive group is very important. I don't think you can have really, a spiritual community existing right in the midst of a thoroughly negative society. The negative society wouldn't permit you to exist. So, the influence of the spiritual community has to pervade the whole of society to the extent at least of transforming it into a positive group. A group which is open-ended to the possibility of spiritual life, a spiritual commitment, you see what I mean? And this is one of the reasons I have my eye on little old New Zealand because it can be done there you see, because first of all, you know the existing social and domestic life as far as I have seen it is not bad anyway because you've got quite a long way a way from the wicked old world; though it's probably catching up quite fast. New Zealand is big enough and there's very few people. There is only 3 million people in that

vast country - well it's as big as Britain. And there are only 3 million people scattered, all these innocent New Zealanders, some of them with blue eyes even (laughter). So if you had a really strong spiritual community there you could transform that whole society. I think the biggest difficulty you would have, would be economic, that is to say, in connection with the meat trade. One of the things I liked least about New Zealand on my first visit was whenever I opened the newspaper and turned to the ads, there were for slaughter house men. Apparently you can get a job as a slaughter house attendant any day of the week in New Zealand. That was the case then, I don't know what the economic [87] situation is now. This underlines the fact that to a great extent the economy of New Zealand depends upon wrong livelihood. So this is something that would need to be changed and you'd no doubt encounter quite a bit of resistance from people who had a vested interest in that sort of business. But apart from that I think it would be fairly easy if you had a strong spiritual community, a spiritual community that is an order of some hundreds of members, which is not impossible, you could transform the whole of New Zealand. Only 3 million people and a whole country. They have hardly got an army, they've hardly got a navy, which is pretty good.

: No nuclear power, it's nuclear free.

S: Right, yes. So in the West, in England, it's very difficult to transform society here, there are certain positive features about social, even political life in England. A spiritual community can just about get by. But it's very difficult for us really to transform society here because there are so many institutions with a history going back hundreds of years, thousands or more year in many cases, the church, the monarchy, the army, the university, they're deeply entrenched and very often people don't realize the extent to which they're entrenched. The public schools, the media, the professions. These are all deeply entrenched institutions. Even businesses go back hundreds of years. Everything, sort of loaded down with tradition. You can't move a step without disturbing some old tradition. These old ruins all over England, covered with ivy, which are sort of carefully preserved; sometimes they're worth preserving, sometimes not, sometimes they're just heaps of stones but they're lovingly preserved. This makes it quite difficult to transform society.

: What made you decide to stay here?

S: Well I suppose (laughter) if one wanted to give a rational explanation the rot started here. Britain was the first country to become industrialized, this is where it all started, for better and for worse. So to the extent that I did think it out in this sort of way, I thought well, it all started here and this is where people are going to get disillusioned with it first. I think there is some truth in that.

: Does that apply to America as well, they're pretty much in the rot aren't they?

S: They are, but it didn't start there if you see what I mean. They, America and Germany caught up about a hundred years later.

: Yeah, but people who are born now don't realize that so much, because they've been brought up all their lives...

S: That's true yes. So they take it all for granted, they think that the way they live in an industrialized society is normal and is natural, which of course it is not. (?) some of them, quite a lot of them are beginning to realize it isn't normal, it isn't natural. The reaction is setting in, though I think probably it has set in more powerfully in the States actually. [88]

Certainly in recent years. So it will be quite interesting to see what happens when the FWBO is set up there. Another reason why I started in England is I was familiar with the situation of actually starting up something here. But I think also I quite liked the idea of setting up something in London which was the capital of Britain, which was the country where the whole industrial revolution started, and from which, in a sense, the industrial revolution spread. And thinking that the trend had to be reversed from the very place where it got

started. One could say that the industrial revolution didn't exactly start in London, it was more may be in the Midlands, on a grand scale, but certainly the Royal Society which perhaps it can all be traced back to was set up in London in the seventeenth century. So this just underlines the importance of the positive society, especially for the ordinary person, the person who is never going to take, in this life at least, a deep interest in spiritual things, who is not going to think for himself, who is not going to be a real individual. That is the person who often suffers most when the group is not a positive group. But living in the midst of a positive group such a person who depends on conditions anyway since he's depending on positive conditions can lead a happier and fuller life than otherwise.

: When it's spoken of making the world a pure land, to the extent that people aren't interested or sort of never get interested in spiritual affairs, how is that possible?

S: Well one can speak of the pure land in two ways, either meaning a positive group with a spiritual community at its centre or as a group which has been entirely transformed into a spiritual community. I think it is possible within the foreseeable historical future to have the first but not the second. I think if some cosmic catastrophe doesn't intervene one could have the second but that would involve a time scale of some millions of years which within the context of Mahayana Buddhism is nothing (laughter). Or within the context of the Bodhisattva ideal is nothing. But I think actually within the foreseeable historical future one could have, at least in some countries, a situation in which a society consisted of a positive group or a sort of network of positive groups all vivified so to speak by the spiritual community or spiritual communities within them. I am sure it could be done in New Zealand within a generation. I think there, New Zealand is as penetrable as that, one generation - you could see it as an old man, or even a middle aged man - so a generation...

: Blue eyed! (laughter)

S: Well it wouldn't matter blue eyed or not, no one would care. (Laughter) Thirty years is counted as a generation so you could see it by the time you are 50. An observable change in the whole way of life in the whole country in New Zealand. This is not impossible.

: With a great effect on the world.

S: Right, yes, yes.

: Would it?

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S: Yes, yes. But even if you have a little centre in a place like Bethnal Green, and a few coops, a few communities, it's known around the area very quickly, and that's so small.

: Yeah, I can feel how it is affecting the people around Bethnal Green, the old people. They come up to me and tell me.

S: Yes right. And in the case of India, I mean Lokamitra has mentioned the fact that there's only himself and Purna and there was Padmavajra assisted by the new Indian order members, in a way it's pathetic, there's just so few of them. But all of the Maharashtra, at least all the leaders of the different Buddhist groups and there are hundreds of these leaders, they know, and lots of masses know also, they know there's something happening in Poona. They pick up the vibes as it were. Message flashes around, and news travels really fast in India when you consider that so few people read newspapers or can read at all but news travel very quickly. People get to know very quickly, and it is already going beyond the borders of Maharashtra.

: Quite often when people have got something to react against, quite often it's usually in a negative way. They get to know about you. Or it's when they can find something negative to get off on.

: That doesn't always matter as long as there is an overall positive situation, because that draws attention to it. That's what we find in Poona.

S: In that sort of situation, any publicity is good publicity. (laughter) Whereas in our situation any publicity is 4 bad publicity. Supposing there was an article about us, say, in the Sun with a picture of our prettiest female order member, would it really help us? (laughter) Anyway, let's get on. There's a few things that require comment. "He is also absolutely freed from the four states of misery." That is to say one who has developed insight. What are these four states of misery?

: Hell, the animal realm, the pretas, asuras?

S: It must be. It was four; very often they reckon three as losa. If there's four it must be the asura, the preta, the animal and the hell states. So this is interesting. You can take this literally in terms of rebirth in these states or you can take it in a more general sense. It means once you've developed insight your positivity cannot sink below a certain level, you see what I mean? Even that the situation into which you get yourself cannot be bad beyond a certain point or can be bad only up to a certain point because you have got such tremendous resources within yourself that you are able to counteract the unfavourable circumstances, at least to some extent. In more traditional terms if you develop insight, there is a limit to the unskilful thoughts or mental states to which you can give rise and therefore a limit to the consequences of mental states of that sort. In other words insight ensures a certain degree of emotional positivity, once [90] you develop insight your emotional positivity cannot fall below a certain point, below a certain level. You find that; once you have got some insight you will always be reasonably happy and cheerful, you see what I mean. If you say for instance the hell state, well the hell state represents the state of people who are mad, not people who are mad in a more sort of positive sense, but where people are really mad in an unpleasant sense, who are nastily mad, as it were, sort of psychotic, so once you have developed insight your degree of emotional positivity is such, you can never fall into that state. You may have your odd moment of anguish or doubt or fear. But you never really get into those negative states in that kind of way. You'll always be reasonably, overall, emotionally positive. So the states which are the consequences of an intense degree of emotional negativity will never befall you. It's just like the spiritual community maintaining in existence the positive group. In terms of the individual, a degree of insight would ensure a measure of emotional positivity. The most extreme form of negative mental states will be excluded. So you will not be reborn in those worlds which are the objective counterparts or correlates of those subjective mental states.

: I had heard that if you were reborn as a human being it was quite hard to fall back down.

S: This topic is discussed in the current Mitrata.

: Looking at these 4 states of misery from the point of view of the wheel of life, what about the deva realm then, I mean obviously it's not a state of misery but does insight also mean that you won't get reborn?

S: Well, it is said that one of the reasons, this is traditionally said, one of the reasons why the human state is so favourable to the gaining of enlightenment is that in the human state there is a sort of pleasant mixture of happiness and suffering. In the hell realms there is a predominance of suffering, in the heavenly realms there is predominance of happiness. In the hell realms your mind is overwhelmed by the experience of suffering. It's therefore very difficult to develop positive mental states. It's very difficult to feel metta because you're being made to suffer all the time and you probably don't realize it's all due to your own past actions so you simply develop hatred for those who you think are causing you to suffer. So it's very difficult to develop spiritually if you're in a hell realm. In the same way if you're in a heavenly realm you're reborn as a god. Experience is very pleasant. So it's very difficult for you to develop thoughts of detachment. It's very difficult for you to think of directing your attention to the transcendental because those pleasant experiences take hold of your mind so

powerfully. But in the case of the human state there 's an alternation. Sometimes there's pleasure, sometimes there's pain, so there's not so much pain that you're emotionally crippled, and there's not so much pleasure that you're sort of seduced away from the spiritual. You're kept more on your toes and therefore it is said that the human realm is the best place in which to be reborn. It doesn't mean that spiritual life is absolutely impossible in these other more extreme realms but it is unlikely. [91]

: Because sometimes the hell realms are depicted with he Buddha seeds, as having the most sort of Buddha seeds.

S: Well not most, but more than the heaven realms because in the long run the suffering may be such that "Oh I must get out of this, I must find a way out". This may impel you to go beyond, to look for a spiritual path. But in the case of the heavenly realms a god never says "oh, I must get away from all this. I just can't bear all this happiness". (laughter) You see what I mean? There is another point here. Free from the four states and incapable of committing the six crimes. The text doesn't say "six crimes", it says "six things" but it isn't clear what they are. I've not been able to find in any Buddhist dictionary so far an explanation of these six things. I think probably there was a list once upon a time but it was dropped and never became one of the standard lists. But the general point is, once you developed a certain degree of insight and once you have attained a certain level of emotional positivity as concomitant with that insight, there are certain things you just can't do. You see what I mean? There is a list in Buddhism of five heinous crimes or sins if you like and though these are not actually meant here, as far as I know when these six are mentioned certainly if you developed insight you'd not be able to do these things. The five most serious or heavy offences are that you wound a Buddha, that you kill an Arhant, that you kill your father or kill your mother and sow dissension within the spiritual community. These are the five most serious offences so whether or not any of these are included in the six, certainly someone who had acquired insight would not be able to do these things for obvious reasons. So when you obtain a certain level of insight and emotional positivity certain lines of action just become impossible for you. And this is, of course, the sign that you're changing. There are certain things that perhaps you did before you cannot do them any longer. You just can't, you've no choice, your nature has changed. You just cannot do those things.

: It's a good test that, isn't it? Finding if you cannot do it?

S: Yes, yes. Even if some one puts a pistol up against your head and says 'come on you have to do it' well, you say, 'well I'm sorry I have no choice, I just can't.' In the same way that my eyes are brown and not blue I cannot perform that action. It's impossible. Even if you burn me at the stake. Even if you shoot me. Sometimes people we know actually feel like that. Whatever happens they just can't do the thing that is asked of them. It's impossible. They have no choice. It's not that they're refusing to do it, they just can't. You might as well just ask them to fly. It's impossible. (Pause.) Right, let's pass on to verse eleven and then conclude with that.

"Whatever evil deeds he commits, either by his body, speech or thought, He's incapable of concealing it. For it has been said that such an act is impossible for one who has seen the Path. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace.

[92]

S: Seeing the path means developing insight. The path is the transcendental path. That's why it's got a capital 'P'. So six things were mentioned in the previous verse that someone who had acquired insight couldn't do. So there's one thing mentioned here. That one who has developed insight cannot do and this is very interesting. He cannot conceal any evil deed that he has committed. Let's just see what is the term for evil deed.

: Papaka.

S: Yes 'papaka' 'evil deed'. Whether it is body, speech or mind. Even if it is only a thought. He can't conceal it. So this envisages a situation where, if you develop some insight there are certain things that you can't do, certain unskilful actions you just would not commit. But your insight is not fully developed, and there are still some unskilful actions, some evil actions that you may commit from time to time. If that happens and if you develop even some degree of insight, one sign is that you will be unable to conceal the evil that you have done. Well, this is a very important consideration. I think a proviso has to be added here. You'll be unable to conceal it from other members of the spiritual community. It doesn't mean you'll go and proclaim it to the public at large but you'll not conceal it from other members of the spiritual community. You will be able to confess it. So why is it so important that that complete openness within the spiritual community must be preserved? and even, why is it that insight has this sort of effect? How is it that someone who has developed insight is unable to conceal the evil that he has done?

: You're totally open, you're not trying to protect. You've broken the first ...

S: Yes, yes, the assumption being that one has attained the degree of insight required by actually entering the path which seems to be the suggestion.

: Is it that though they, when they've done it, they have to say, or that they ... if they're asked about it, they will say they're not worried either way. Like the fact that they can't conceal it does that mean they won't conceal it, or that if occasion arises for them needing to reveal it they won't mind revealing it?

S: I read it as meaning that they will not wish to conceal it, eh? That is to say I don't think it means that if a member of the spiritual community asks 'have you done this?' they won't say 'well no I haven't done it'. I think it means that they themselves will spontaneously confess it to other members of the spiritual community. For this reason the insight which is under consideration, or is in question here, seems to be that degree of insight which is sufficient at least to cause you to enter the stream. Now we've already seen that that insight has it's own momentum. It goes on increasing. In other words having entered the stream you cannot but get more and more deeply into the stream. Do you see what I mean? You set up this sort of chain reaction, as it were, that does on constantly increasing by geometrical not arithmetical progression, if I've got it the right way round, but you know what I mean, yes? Which means that you have to keep on growing and one [93] of the most important factors in your spiritual growth and development is surely your relationship with other members of the spiritual community, it's your communication with them that enables you to grow. So if you've got to go on growing you've no choice because now you've entered the stream, that also mean you've got to keep up your communication with other members of the spiritual community. You can't help keeping up your communication with other members of the spiritual community. Having developed insight, having entered the stream you will inevitably keep up your communication with other members of the spiritual community. But how can you possibly do that if you are concealing things from them, in the sense that you do not allow them to know you. In order to make communication possible and you've no choice in that matter, you will want them to know you as you are. You will not want them to be under any false apprehension about you. So if you have done something which you know is unskilful you yourself will spontaneously confess it and open it up to others. Because you want them to know you and you want them to know you so that communication is possible. And you want communication to be possible so that you can continue to grow. And you've no choice now, having entered the stream, having developed insight. You've no choice of not growing. The process is now irreversible. So you must open up whatever you've done to other members of the spiritual community.

: Could it also be a means of purification?

S: Well, yes of course, right.

: And you, feel sort of impure?

S: Well yes and you have to purify yourself because you have to go on growing by virtue of the fact that you have entered the stream. It's not an external compulsion. It's that the compulsion laid upon you by your own very own nature has now partially transformed. Having initiated the process of real transformation, you can't stop it. It's too late to have any second thoughts. You're bound for enlightenment whether you like it or not. So this is why this point of stream entry is so important. Coming into the stream, well you needn't bother about the rest in a manner of speaking, you see what I mean?

: Can I go back to the third fetter. It's troubling me a little bit because there doesn't seem to be a suitable equivalent for acts and rituals and religious observances in our society. Could it be that breaking the third fetter consists of the development of insight into . sila 5 into religious observances, into...

S: One could say, I mean, what their true function really is.

: ... seeing the mechanism behind, seeing how they actually work?

S: One could say that, yes, em. But if they are used at all they must be used in a positive manner, with awareness.

: Would you say that stream entry, then is the most important goal at the moment?

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S: Well yes, because you need not bother about enlightenment once you have attained stream entry one could say. There is no point in aiming at enlightenment. What you have to aim at is stream entry. If you aim at enlightenment, it seems very, very remote and that might discourage you but stream entry does seem within your grasp so to speak. You see what I mean? And having got there, you will, in a manner of speaking, inevitably be carried to enlightenment.

There is a sort of pseudo question or pseudo problem that arises here in connection with the Bodhisattva ideal. Because if you take the Mahayana teaching very literally you should refrain from entering the stream because you don't want to be carried along to an individual nirvana, you want to remain free to operate in the universe, whenever needed. But that's really quite a false sort of antithesis. That sort of antithesis between the arhant path of individual enlightenment or the Bodhisattva path of universal enlightenment arises only when either the arhant ideal or the Bodhisattva ideal or both are taken very narrowly. They're really different aspects of the same process. There is only one spiritual path. If you look at it, as it were, you know, in more individual, I won't say more individualistic terms but more individual terms, it looks more like the path of arhantship. If you look at it in terms of its effects as far as other people are concerned then it's more like the Bodhisattva path. There aren't really two distinct paths within which we have to choose, or between which we have to choose. So your entering the stream is equivalent in Mahayana terms to the developing of the bodhicitta in the real sense. It's also equivalent, in the real sense, of going for refuge. So understood in their essence, apart from their more literal formulations, going for refuge, entering the stream, the arising of the bodhicitta, these are really all different expressions for the same experience, looked at from different points of view. (pause) Anyway, any further points about what we've done so far this morning? Because we only have a few minutes left.

: I was just thinking of the stream entrant, not concealing anything, in terms of the individual, trying to be authentically himself which presumably would include the persona.

S: Well you don't have to try to be yourself. You just have to be careful that you don't pretend to be anybody else. You don't have to bother about showing people your face, it's just enough if you don't put on any mask. If there's no mask people will just naturally see your face. (pause) But it does stress the importance of openness. This is stressed in the Dhammapada in that verse where the Buddha says "The rain doesn't penetrate the roof which is not thatched."

Yes? It's a paradox.

: Sometimes you feel you can't hide anyway. Because some people just see anyway. They can see through your barrages. They quite clearly see...

S: Well there are some people from whom you don't want to hide. Even when you have done something that you know is wrong. (pause) Our natural tendency is to be ourselves. I've sometimes pointed out that you don't have to teach a child to tell the truth, a [95] child naturally tells the truth. I mean, if he just says what he saw, what happened; you've to teach him to tell a lie. I mean if a child goes to the door when there's a knock and someone says "ooh, is mummy in?" the child will just say "yes". You don't have to teach the child to tell the man that yes, his mummy is here but you do have to teach the child to say that "No, mummy is out" when she isn't out. So openness is natural actually. We're conditioned into being something other than open. Either by fear, or desire of some kind, or craving of some kind. All right then, leave it there for the moment. (pause) Verse 12 which seems quite appropriate at this moment of the year. Would someone like to read it?

"As a clump of trees in blossom with their tops during the first heat of the summer months, so the sublime doctrine leading to Nirvana was taught for the highest goal. This precious jewel is in the Sangha, by this truth may there be peace."

S: So do you get the point of the comparison. It's quite a poetical comparison, isn't? I think this, in some ways, is one of the most beautiful, in the sense of the most aesthetically pleasing verses in the whole of the Pali Canon. Except that it hasn't been rendered Very poetically, perhaps, modestly I could (laughs) see if I've done better myself. I'm not so sure, but anyway, let's see:

"Just as a forest grove puts forth its flowers, when the first month of summer heat doth come
So for"the highest good of all He preached the truth sublime which to Nirvana leads."

It's as though the teaching. The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma is likened to the breaking forth of blossoms when the heat comes. When the first heat of summer comes. So this is very evocative. It suggests that the dharma taught by the Buddha or rather the Buddha's teaching of the dharma is a spontaneous natural thing, like the springing forth of flowers. It says, well the translation says, 'as a clump of trees in blossom with their tops.' The suggestion is of the tall tree, the tree comes into bloom at the very top. So there seems to be a sort of touch of symbolism there too. The Buddha, as it were, comes into blossom with the blossom of the teaching at the peak of his being, as it were. We just render summer heat comes; so, the summer heat can be interpreted in two ways. You can say the Buddha's own enlightenment, what represents the, is the sun eh? is the warmth and light which brings forth the blossom of the teaching on the tree of the Buddha's whole being. Or you could say the suffering of living beings is the scorching heat which causes the blossoms of the Buddha's teaching to break forth. You can take it in either way. Yes? I mean, there are a number of allied similes in the text for instance in the Saddharma-pundarika the dharma is likened to the rain, the great rain cloud but also to the sun. Which causes things to grow. But here it's living beings who grow when they receive the rain or the sunshine of the dharma. But here the Dharma is the blossom which the Buddha himself produces, you see what I mean? It's as though the Buddha's teaching is the flower of his being, spontaneously bursting forth when the sun shines, [96] either the sun of his full enlightenment or the sun of the suffering of living beings. But in either case, the teaching is not seen as something artificial or something thought out, but something springing forth from the Buddha just as naturally as blossoms spring from the trees. But that is not the usual way we speak about the Buddha and his teaching., of the Dharma. But it's a very appropriate way you could say When you explain the Dharma, you know, even you're on your own more humble level, it's as if you are producing blossoms for the benefit of other people. You are not just laying it down, you know, 'this is what the Buddha says'. You just feel as if you are blossoming, as it were, for their benefit. You're giving of your best. You can also carry it further that the tree produces the blossoms, the blossoms are the teaching. But within each blossom what have you got?

: A new tree.

S: A new tree, because you've got a seed. So, it's as though you know, in that way, just like the tree, Buddhahood propagates itself, one Buddha produces another Buddha, via the teaching, of course, is represented by the blossoms. You can say that the flower is a tree's way of producing another tree. Some people look at it the other way round and say a tree is a flower's way of producing another flower, but you know, you see what I mean? The points of view are relative. But the main point here, is the Dharma as something that breaks forth, naturally, spontaneously from the Buddha which is a quite useful way of looking at the teaching of the Buddha or the way in which the Buddha teaches. Otherwise, you read some books on Buddhism you get the impression of the Buddha as a grim, school-masterly sort of figure standing at a blackboard and, you know, just writing out the four noble truths or something like that or 'thou shalt not', hum? and then follows a list of 220 precepts. (Pause.)

The rhythm here is very good, for instance the whole sutra is in the same meter, but here it seems especially appropriate. (Bhante recites in Pali.)

"Vanappagumbe yatha phussitagge
gimhana mase pathamasmim gimhe,
tathupamam dhammavaram adesayi
nibbanagamim paramamhitaya,
idam pi Buddhhe ratanam panitam,
etana saccena suvatthi hotu."

It's quite beautiful poetically. There is a quantity of rhythm one can't do justice to in English very easily. The Dharma is described, by the way, as 'dhammavaram' which is translated here as 'sublime' 'vara' means superior, simply higher. Sublime, yes that will do. I don't know what the other translation says. "Best of Gospels", not a very happy translation perhaps. It doesn't say 'best', it just says superior - 'vara'. So the next verse catches hold of that word 'vara'. So would someone like to read the next verse. [97]

"The excellent one, the knower of the excellent. The giver of the excellent and bringer of excellence has expounded. the excellent doctrine. This precious jewel is in the Buddha, By this truth, may there be peace."

S: So, it's as though, the fact that the Dharma has been described as 'vara' in this verse, 'the best'. Whereas after all the Buddha's teaching of the Dharma has been compared with the trees, putting forth blossoms. So the Dharma is compared to blossoms. The blossom is growing on the top of the trees, on the highest part of the tree, the superior part; so this epithet 'vara' 'superior' naturally attaches itself to dharma in this context. So it's as though in the next verse, the compiler of the Sutta, the ballad, the poem, sort of takes up this word 'vara' and he sort of plays upon it in a way which isn't reproduced in the translation. (Bhante recites in Pali.)

"Varo varannu varado varaharo
anuttaro dhammavaram adesayi,
idam pi Buddhhe ratanam panitam,
etana saccena suvatthi hotu."

So I've rendered it a bit better. It goes like this:

"The highest one, the knower of the highest,
the giver and the bringer of the highest."

You see I've translated Ivaral as 'highest'. It's really 'high' rather than 'highest'.

"T'is He who taught the highest truth of all ('dhammavara')
yea, in the Buddha shines this glorious gem.

By virtue of this truth may bliss abound."

Maybe that gives a better idea of the spirit of it. So it's as though the mind of the compiler is, sort of, overwhelmed by the idea of the superiority of the Dharma, the sheer excellence Dharma. So he said:

"Varo varannu varado varaharo"

All in one line, the excellent one, the Buddha is 'varo', the Buddha himself is the best, the excellent. He is also the knower of the excellent, that is to say the knower of nirvana. Not only that, He is the giver of the excellent, that is the Dharma, the bringer of the excellent, the teaching itself. You see what I mean? In other words there's this tremendous stress on the excellent - what is superior, what is sublime, what is noble. The Buddha is that, the Buddha embodies that, He has realized that, He gives us that, He brings that, nothing but the best. It's a bit reminiscent of the ancient Greek conception of excellence. Of the best in every field. Of being the best you can, of doing the best you can, giving the best, bringing the best. Not being [98] satisfied with anything inferior to that. (Pause.)

So this is also a very simple and non technical way of looking at the Buddha and the Dharma and the teaching of the Dharma. The Buddha is simply called the best, the highest. As I said the Pali doesn't use the comparative degree, just the excellent. The word 'superior' in English has got a slightly negative connotation but excellent is good. The Buddha is excellent - the knower of the excellent, the giver of the excellent, the bringer of the excellent.

: The sutta seems to quite change with this verse. The translations seems to change very much, well with verse 12.

S: Yes, it definitely becomes very much more poetical and there is much more feeling and emotion in it. (Pause.)

There's one point I didn't mention in connection with verse 12. It says 'As a clump of trees in blossom with their tops during the first heat of the summer months, so the sublime doctrine leading to nirvana was taught for the highest goal. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. This suggests that it's the duty, as it were, of the Sangha to teach, just as the Buddha did. This jewel of the production of the Dharma just as the Buddha did, which is just like the flowering of the tree, this is in the Sangha - it's as though it's the Sangha's responsibility to make known the Dharma in this way just as the Buddha did.

: It says there's a clump of trees, not just one tree.

S: Yes there's that point too. Let's just see how literally we can take that. It's 'bhana' which is a grove of trees.

: It's almost like passed on isn't it, to the trees and they'll pass on their blossom.

S: Yes, it doesn't say the Dharma was taught by the Buddha. It simply says the Dharma was taught. It's as though the Buddha is also included in the clump of trees. In one sense, He is the founder of the Sangha. but in another sense he is a member of the Sangha. So it's as though the Buddha is the biggest of the trees.

: The oldest tree.

S: The oldest tree and there are all these other trees around him. Ray be they've all dropped, you know, grown from the seeds dropped by the first tree. But anyway, now there's a whole grove and they are all blooming as it were and that blooming is the preaching or teaching of the Dharma.

Also it says, another point I didn't touch upon, Inibbanaganim paramamhitayal. That is the

teaching of the Dharma which leads to Nirvana, which is taught for the sake of the highest goal, or highest good actually (paramahitaya'). In other words, this teaching of the Dharma which is compared to the blossoming of the trees in the first month of the summer heat, this is taught for the sake of the highest good. Not for any sort of lower purpose any lower goal. You don't learn the Dharma simply so as to be able to sort out your problems or to be able to lead a more happy married life or anything of that sort, but for nothing less but the realization of the goal of enlightenment, one could say. That [99] is the true purpose of the teaching of the Dharma. Not just to alleviate temporary problems and difficulties.

: But when they became enlightened too, then that's their natural tendency to teach.

S: Well one could say that it's not a question of teaching it when you are enlightened because at every stage of your development you are influencing other people for better or for worse. You see what I mean? If your own mental states and actions are predominantly unskilful, well that's the way in which you'll be affecting people. You'll be as it were teaching what is not the Dharma all the time. But as you yourself develop more, as you yourself grow more then the effect that you are having on other people will become more and more skilful. And if you actually understand the Dharma and are consciously practising the Dharma then you'll consciously speak, as it were, in terms of the Dharma, in other words you'll be teaching the Dharma. But it'll be the culmination of a process that has been going on all the time. It won't be that when you are enlightened you start teaching the Dharma having never said anything about the Dharma before.

: Yes, or what about those people who go off and try to get enlightened in the woods or places like that, or in solitary places away from cities?

S: Well, what do you mean, are they on the right path or are they not or what are they doing?

: Yes.

S: Well, it's basically a question of balance. You need to spend some time with other people especially within the context of a spiritual community because that will enable you to develop certain qualities, especially those connected with communication, positive emotions, and so on but you also need to spend time on your own in order to may be enhance your sense of your self as an individual. To lessen your dependence, especially your emotional dependence on other people. So you need to have, you know for a complete spiritual life, you need to have some experience of both of these. You need the opportunity to live with a spiritual community but also the opportunity to get away, by yourself from time to time, even get away from the spiritual community. In a sense, in a sense you're not away from them but you haven't got the direct physical contact. You don't have the direct physical presence of other members of the spiritual community, you know, in the way that you've perhaps become accustomed to. So it is significant that the Buddha did start a spiritual community. He didn't say, well He said yes, here are the roots of trees, sit down and meditate. But, He didn't envisage people sitting indefinitely at the roots of their trees and never having contact with one another so it would seem that the Buddha's ideal for the Sangha, or for his followers, from a more general point of view, was that they should have the opportunity of experiencing the spiritual community and themselves as members of a spiritual community but also have the [100] opportunity of experiencing themselves, as it were, on their own. So one has to make provisions for both of these possibilities. Traditionally in Buddhism you'd find some situation in which monks, for instance, lived all the time in monasteries. They never go away on their own. That is unbalanced. On the other hand you might find some who went away and lived as hermits and never had the experience of a spiritual community. That also is unbalanced. You see what I mean? So one must try to balance both of these according to one's need. It isn't just a question of automatically deciding "well, I'm going to have six months with the community and then I'm going to have three months on my own, no. You just have to see what your actual situation is and what your actual needs are from week to week and month to month and year to year. So this is one of the reasons why in the FWBO we not only have spiritual communities but we encourage people also to go away on solitary

retreat from time to time. This will make sure or it will help to make sure that those living in the community don't start regarding the community as a sort of, well just a group, even positive group because it's got to be more than that. You mustn't start depending on the community for your psychological, emotional security. You mustn't start depending on the sight of all those familiar faces around you, so go away from time to time, just be quite on your own for a few weeks at least. That helps balance things and it helps make sure that when you do live in a spiritual community you're really living in a spiritual community and not just with a pleasant group of people. (Pause.) I mean quite a lot of people nowadays, I mean in the world at large are quite terrified of solitude.

: A common punishment is solitary confinement.

: It's very hard to find solitude as well.

: A lot of people have found it ?)

: Well not from a Buddhist point of view but in general. You hear about people being put in (hermitages?) ten years or something and then being scared to come back.

S: But they aren't too common nowadays those hermits. But I remember when I was staying down in Cornwall - Vajrakumara and I were staying in a chalet in Cornwall for quite a few months; nearly a year in fact. It was quite extraordinary, it was almost an horrific experience to go into Plymouth and do our shopping. It was very very strange indeed. It was really quite weird. We used to go in sort of haste, we used to go in a bit reluctantly and really hasten back and the people that we saw seemed so strange. Well they were strange, so weird. And especially going into a big supermarket in Plymouth, I don't know if any of you know Plymouth but it was bombed during the war, then rebuilt with a total lack of imagination; but going into these huge supermarkets, just like the sort of place that Subhuti described in his dream, you know sort of Formica and chrome, extending almost to infinity and just here and there, you know, an elderly woman usually, sort of immobilised with greed, just staring (laughter), with a, what I call, reptilian stare at something on a shelf, you know, a great lump of cheese, or a ham and she just stands there, sort of contemplating it, with this expression of dull greed. And eventually, this sort of, this claw like hand (laughter) would come up and seize it, put it back in [101] the wire shopping basket. It was really quite horrific, eh, it's far worse than things you might see in the zoo, or places like that. And people seemed in just extraordinary mental states, because not having had much contact with people - sometimes for the whole week or even the whole fortnight, because sometimes we delayed our shopping - you could see the state that people were really in, it was - well, they seemed really quite mad. It's as though they were all having negative trips. Just how it seemed all of them practically. You very rarely saw a healthy person, and this is how you, you experience things when you have been on your own for a bit; you can't help it. It's quite useful in fact. And as I mentioned the other evening - after all in London I'd been in contact mainly with order members and, well, we didn't have Mitras then, but order members and friends, and so after all that, you know, just staying in the chalet, just myself and Vajrakumara and just having an expedition occasionally into Plymouth, and just seeing these strange people . It was quite weird.

: You don't even have to really have been by yourself, you can just be on any, any retreat, and you go back to London and you notice it.

S: Yes, yes. Well you can even notice it just living say in a place like Sukhavati - you just have to take the tube, you know, into London. You notice it then.

: Also, I always find noticing it arriving at Bethnal Green. There is a very definite sort of atmosphere to the place.

S: Yes, yes. Well what one notices most I find is a sort of fullness, and apathy of it all, yeah. And you know the inertness and the triviality. It's almost as though you see in the gutter, you

know, in the dirty gutter, all sorts of bits of newspaper being trodden on; it's as though people's souls are just like that. That's the sort of impression one gets. Anyway, it doesn't do to dwell upon it. (Pause.)

So that was pertaining to verse 12, so back to verse 13, which as I said, revolves around the idea of the excellent, the Buddha as the excellent one, the one who knows the excellent, who gives the excellent, brings the excellent, and has expounded the excellent doctrine, the Dhammavara. So this precious jewel is in the Buddha, yeah. This verse is predominantly about the Buddha of course. (Pause.) Right, let's go on to verse 13 then, which has got, quite a bit in it.

"The old is extinct, nothing new to be reproduced
The mind detached from future birth
They have destroyed the seeds of existence,
the desires do not spring up again.
Those wise ones go out, even as this lamp.
In the Sangha is this precious jewel,
By this truth, may there be happiness."

S: The original reads very much more vigorously than it's a very sort of tame translation.

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"Khinam puranam navam n'atthi sambhavam", which means - you probably get some idea even without understanding what it means 'khinam' means 'this fading away', 'withering away'; 'puranam' 'the old whittles away'. 'navam n'atthi sambhavam', 'the new ... doesn't become', 'doesn't develop', 'doesn't arise'. So it's referring to the, as it were, the moment of Insight that we were talking about in the morning. When that, you know, moment of Insight occurs, the old, that is the old karma, the old conditionality, the old reactivity, start withering away, yeah, and fresh conditionality, fresh reactivity, does not arise; the two sides of the same process, Yeah. You get rid of the old rubbish, and you don't bring any fresh rubbish; or don't create any fresh rubbish. In the original, this seemed - or in the edition of the text this is put within inverted commas, as though this is something which someone sort of realizes and declares, eh. (Pause.) So, *livirattacitta ayatike bhavasmim*" which means ... that the mind is detached from any future existence. The mind, eh, has no thought of, no desire for any further experience of conditionality and reactivity, and soon. In the Theravada teaching, in the Pali texts, we usually get just the more negative side of things, so one shouldn't think that what the mind is, is after a state of extinction, as it were. But what is actually said is simply that you know, the old is finished, the new does not arise, and the mind detaches itself from any further, any future conditions, eh. Not that the mind is going to extinction, but it is entering a state, you know, which, about which nothing can be said. A state well, we could call it a state of pure creativity, though the actual text doesn't give it any such, er, any such positive description. (Pause.) So the old kamma - this is in brackets, this is understood ...

"The old is extinct, nothing new to be produced
The mind detached from future existence
They have destroyed the seeds of existence."

That is "they", those who realize Insight, or develop Insight to that extent, eh. They've destroyed the seeds of any further conditioned existence, eh. They haven't of course destroyed the seeds of creativity, those seeds are sprouting more vigorously than ever. "Their desires do not spring up again". "Those wise ones go out even as this lamp." This of course can be misunderstood, I mean this is a very misleading verse in a way, certainly when translated into English, because it suggests that you're extinct, you're just extinguished, eh. And people would quote this sort of verse as evidence of sort of negativism of Buddhism. But it is not to be thought that, you know, that represents the entire process, eh, There is., you know, a positive side as well as the negative side. But the Pali texts, the Theravada tradition, usually dwells on the negative, what is to be got rid of rather than what remains afterwards.

: It may be a play on the word 'nibbana' too.

S: In what way?

: The word for 'extinction' is 'Nibbanti'.

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S: Oh, yes! Er, well it isn't really 'extinction', it's 'blowing out', yes?

: ... go out.

S: "Nibbanti dhira yathayam padipo". Really is, er 'Nibbanti' is ... 'they become 'Nirvanized', I mean that would be the best way of translating it. 'Those wise ones became nirvanized'. Just like this lamp, eh. The lamp goes out but it is not that the lamp ceases to exist, eh. You see what I mean? (Pause.)

: Is this connected with the old Indian idea that ... there is almost a repository of fire, or glow, that you never properly extinguish it?

S: Well, it is sometimes said in explanation of this sort of ways of putting things, that in ancient India they did not - when a fire went out - they did not believe that the fire become completely extinct, but that from a gross it went to a subtle state of existence, the subtle being, you know, by definition more real than the gross, you see what I mean? So it wasn't that when the visible flame ceased there was nothing left after that, no; it had reverted to in which it was invisible. When for instance man is quite mysterious. Where does it come from? stone against a flint and then all this flame comes come from? It must have been lurking somewhere, know, primitive man thinks. So in the same way that the light of the lamp goes out, it isn't as though it's extinct, it becomes extinct, it reverts to its previous subtle state. So therefore, this sort of comparison about these wise ones becoming 'nirvanized' just like the lamp going out, it is not really so negative on those terms, would not seem so negative to an ancient Indian, as it seems to a modern Westerner, eh? I mean we would say, well if you switch off the electric light, you don't annihilate it, eh? It's in a manner of speaking there, I mean, you just can switch it on again. It's just prevented from manifesting itself, but it's there, in a manner of speaking. (Long pause.)

So this verse refers explicitly to the waning out of everything reactive, eh. It says nothing about the bringing in of the creative but that is to be understood. But, you know, to dwell on the negative side for a bit, it is a quite important aspect of the spiritual life, that you have finished with the past, do you see what I mean? That the past is merely past. It does not linger on into the present, much less still into the future But there are certain things, certain mental states, with which you have finally and definitely, and permanently finished, that are not going to arise again for you, on account of your development of the requisite degree of insight . They have been burned out so to speak and they are not going to spring up again. This is certainly one aspect of the spiritual life, even though it isn't the whole story. And the Theravada tradition dwells very much on this particular aspect; almost exclusively sometimes. (Pause.) I mean in a way it's quite a relief. If for instance you had a really bad temper, and then one day, you know, the time comes when, due to your own insight, and may be, you know, your own past suffering and your understanding of the causes of that suffering, you just finish completely with [104] your bad temper, and you know that you're never going to get angry to that extent again, em. Then you can really say "The old is extinct, nothing new to be reproduced", eh. You've really finished with the past, the past is past. And there are so many things that we carry with us from the past, which happened in the past, and which we allow to influence us even in the present, we're not finished with them. So we have to make the past be past. We can't really live in the present, you know, unless we finish with the past.

: People are often very reluctant to leave their past, or the past behind.

S: Oh, yes. I remember once talking to, I think I mentioned this before, to a woman who was really sad, upset, depressed, unhappy, and you know, she got talking and I asked her "Well,

what has made you like this?" "Oh, my husband left me." So I said, "Oh, when did that happen?", so she said, "Thirteen years ago." (Laughter.) Yeah? I thought he'd left her last week, the way she said it. But she was still dwelling on that.

: I saw an article in a science magazine recently about memory, and it was going on the preciousness of memory, how memory to human beings is more precious than anything, and that ... I mean it, was actually written in a positive sense, but in fact when you look at it more closely, in these terms, it's not positive at all.

S: Well it's not just memory, you can certainly remember may be someone beating you when you were small, you can remember it, without the after effects of that actually continuing into the present. And sometimes the after effect of things, you know, continues into the present, even though you don't remember the original incident, So in a sense it doesn't matter whether you remember or don't remember, the important thing is that the past shouldn't prolong itself into the present, not that sort of past.

: In situations where perhaps you can't remember, something in the past, let's say a trauma that in effect you blocked off from it, how can you actually confront it or get to know it or get to grips with it?

S: Well, it's not the cause of what happened, you know, that you Have to confront, it is the mental state with which you have been left. Do you see what I mean? So you have to confront that on its own merits, as it were, and say, 'Well, this is just not a skilful mental state, it's doing me no good', regardless of how it arose, it might have been my father slapped me, it might have been my mother, I don't remember. But you don't have to actually be able to remember what exactly it was that caused you to get into that sort of state, before you can do anything about it.

: That's interesting because I think there is quite a few, sort of groups that practice this sort of therapy, you know, getting people into a state where they sort of revert to childhood or something, and go through a traumatic experience again, sort of re-live it, and then in that way kick it out.

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S: It apparently does sometimes happen that you can get rid of it in that way, but it seems not always, by any means. I mean how can you, you must have genuine insight, just to experience I mean, if you were not free from it after experiencing it the first time, it doesn't mean that you're going to be necessarily free from it after experiencing it a second time.

: Twice as bad. (Laughter.)

S: Do you see what I mean? You need insight to overcome it completely and perfectly and finally. (Pause.) I mean if you for instance can remember the original cause of your present mental state, and how it all came about, well that will just help you in understanding how your present mental state happened to arise. But it won't by itself be sufficient, you know, to extirpate that state. Because you may think 'Well if I was treated like that, no wonder I'm feeling in the state I am, I'm fully justified, who can blame me, I've got every reason', you could look at it in that sort of way . (Pause.) So you still, whether you remember the original cause or not, you still have to tackle that particular mental state, in the present because it has prolonged itself into the present. I mean by understanding how it arose in the past, you don't necessarily thereby just confine it to the past, in other words kill it.

: You could, I suppose, even get caught up in whatever it is even more strongly.

S: Em, yes. Because there were a lot of injuries perhaps that Have been done to us, eh, and that upset us and we remember those injuries, and we remember that they upset us and we're still upset. But the fact that we remember, you know, how it all happened, I mean, doesn't

help us in getting rid of our present sense of injury. We have to tackle that as it were independently. The fact that you understand how a particular unskilful mental state arose is not tantamount to getting rid of that unskilful mental state, unfortunately.

: Yeah. It's a bit like, on a more wide sense, you don't know how ignorance arose, but you sort of try to get enlightened and overcome it. You can't go back that far.

S: Yes, you can't go back that far. And what about previous lives, f mean, if you do believe in previous lives.

:Well, if you ...

S: So under some circumstances, it may help you in unravelling the whole process and straightening things out, it may help you to be able to recollect how it all happened. It may. But even if, even if it just help you, it doesn't, you know, automatically solve things, just the mere fact that you can remember how they all happened and came about. In any case you have to face the unskilful mental state as you actually experience it here and now, and get rid of it by one means or another, with or without remembering how it all started.

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: I mean certain actions have certain consequences, that sort of comes into it, and by ... seeing what you did having certain consequences, you either do it or don't do it again.

S: Yes. It could help in that way.

S: Well, verse fourteen seems to bring us to the end of the sutta proper. The suggestion seems to be that someone has reached the point of being fully liberated, has attained Nirvana. All the old conditionality is completely finished with, all the old karma is completely exhausted, eh, and no fresh karma is being produced, no fresh conditionality, no fresh reactivity. And this is tantamount to Nirvana, this is tantamount to Enlightenment, according to the Theravada tradition.

: It's like gone beyond.

S: Em, gone beyond, em.

: The lamp ... Gone beyond.

S: (Pause.) So then we come back to the beings, eh. Would you like to read verse fifteen? These three verses follow the same pattern as you see, so that there is the Buddha, Dharma and, the Sangha.

"We beings here assembled, whether terrestrial or celestial, Salute the' accomplished Buddha, Honoured by gods and men, May there be happiness!"

S: So the other verses are exactly the same except that instead of Buddha it's Dharma, and then Sangha.

: I think in your translation in 'The Enchanted Heart' there is an extra verse.

S: Oh.

: The Buddha. The Buddha verse is written twice.

S: Oh. Let's have a look. (Pause.) Ah, yes, that's true, the Buddha has been typed twice. Yes. Naughty Ashvajit. Never mind, we'll. forgive him.

: In the previous verse? the seeds of existence, what would that be, sort of greed, hatred and delusion?

S: Yes, er ... or the samskaras, you know, more technically. Or Karma formations, eh. That is to say, those unskilful, or skilful mental actions, or mental states, which under the law of karma, have the power of bringing about further life situations within the Wheel of Life, em. (Pause.) Or which bring you into the Wheel of Life, you could say, em.. They're the seeds of your future existences. In other words they represent the possibility of the prolongation of the present state of conditioned existence. At present you are in [107] the, what shall I say, the action phase, em. But after a while you'll have to experience the 're-action phase. usually termed the rebirth, em. And sometimes it happens within the context of this life itself, there's an action phase and then a reaction phase. The, you know, the karma phase and the karma-vipaka phase. So where there is the one, sooner or later there will be the other. The one is the seed of the other. The other is the fruit, em. (Pause. So what has happened? You know in the first two verses, the compiler of the sutta was addressing the assembled beings, eh, both celestial and terrestrial, he wished that they should be happy, he asked them to listen attentively and to look kindly, lovingly, upon human beings because they brought offerings, day and night, eh. So then the sutta is taught, as it were, and - or proclaimed - and then after that the beings themselves, terrestrial and celestial, are represented as honouring the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha, and you know wishing that all living beings may, may be happy, so what does that represent so to speak?

: It's almost like they've, er, they've accepted the teaching ...

S: They've accepted the teaching, yes,

: It's almost like they're not, they're no longer the audience, they're ...

S: Yes.

: ... they're ready to teach it themselves.

S: Yes, yes, right. They've been converted.

: From object to subject.

S: Yes, from object to subject. From 'you' it is 'we',

: Actually, that seems to be more in the English than in the Pali.

S: What's that? (Laughter.)

: That 'Whatever beings' to 'We beings' seems to be more the English, rather the Pali. The Pali seems to be identical.

S: Yes, 'Yanidha' is 'Yanidha bhutani'.

: You've spout it. (Laughter.)

: The opening lines are the same as the closing lines, for the first part of it.

S: That is true, 'Yanidhal, em. 'Whatever here', it means 'Whatever here'. The salutation is sort of impersonal

: Because in your translation ... [108]

S: No, em?

: It has 'To the teaching, let us bow'.

S: Yes, because 'namassama' is just 'Let us salute'. So, there it's as though the translator in the translation we're using on the whole, sorts of reads that back into the first line; this seems to be what has happened. Even though, as you say, the first line is the same, it is 'Yanidha bhutanil, em. It's as though 'We', the beings here', I mean, this is in the light of the last line, eh 'Samgham namassama', is 'We salute'. 'Dhammam namassamal and so on, 'Buddham namassama'. (Long Pause.)

So what sort of impression do you get of the sutta as a whole?

: A sort of hymn to Stream Entry and beyond.

S: Ah, that's good, yes, yes. It's very suitable for recitation, you can understand why it is recited so often, along with the Mangala Sutta and the Karaniya Metta Sutta. It is not just an exposition of the teaching, it's a bit more than that, or a bit different from that.

: It's also excellent material for beginners.

S: That's true - there are some quite important points which arise.

: It's said, Bhante, that this was given by the Buddha at a time of drought or something like this.

S: Yes. There is, I would say a late combinatorial story, drought and plague, and that the Buddha instructed Ananda to go round, er, reciting this sutta and at the same time sprinkling...

: Water.

S: ... holy water, which doesn't sound very much like the Buddha in a way, (laughter), but certainly this how it is, or was used, or has been used, since a very early date.

: As a sort of chant, as a spell?

S: Yes, yes.

: It's one of the Paritrana Sutras.

S: It's one of the Paritrana Sutras, yes.

: What are they?

S: These are extracts from the Pali Canon, which have been compiled into a book. I think there is thirty-two or thirty-three of them. These suttas, or passages from the Pali scriptures, are regarded as particularly efficacious when recited as charms, or spells, and in the Theravada countries the bhiksus are always reciting these for the benefit of the lay people, people will invite them to their homes to recite them. It can't really be said this was countenanced by the Buddha himself, it seems highly doubtful. It does seem in a sense a misuse of those texts, because instead of practising say the Mangala Sutta, you get the monks who come and recite it for you for the sake [109] of bringing you good luck.

: Aaah.

S: Em, you see,

: It seems like that

S: Yes, but on the other hand, perhaps you have to recognize that when everybody considers themselves Buddhists, not everybody is going to rise to the heights of actually practising the Mangala Sutta. So in order to help keep the positive group going, perhaps one has to lend oneself to this sort of thing, but I don't feel very happy about using the texts from the scriptures, the purport of which is clearly spiritual, and meant to be actually practised - I am not in favour of using them, you know, just as things to be recited to bring you good luck; this seems a real degeneration, because this is also what is, has happened with the Going for Refuge and precepts. They're just things to recite you to bring good luck. So, it's very difficult to know where to draw the line.

: It seems a danger with some people too, of actually alienating them from the suttas ...

S: Yes, yes.

: ... because they regard them as superstitious chants.

S: Right, yes indeed. I mean there is a case I've quoted I think in the Three Jewels where in the case of the Vinaya Pitaka, in some ways the most important section, the most, in a way the most powerful section, if you like to look at it in that way, is that which relates to the ordination, as we call it, of bhiksus, and there are certain formulas which are used when a bhiksu is ordained. I was told by one of my Thai bhiksu friends, that particular portions of the ordination ceremony, are very favoured in Thailand for use as charms in order to help you seduce women. You see what I mean, eh? So here you have something, I mean something from the ordination ceremony of making a bhiksu which is the actual antithesis of seducing women one would have thought, but since it's considered to be, you know, very powerful, as it's associated with that particular ceremony, it's used in that sort of way, where people want to invoke power for a particular mundane purpose of their own. In the same way, you know, in - there was a tradition of the Perfection of Wisdom texts being written out and wrapped round somebody's spear, you know, when he goes into battle, which doesn't seem to be the best way of using these texts, yeah. (Laughter.) So, you know what I mean - when I was going around among the ex-Untouchables in India, I was frequently reciting things, very often at weddings. They did call for these sort of things to be recited, but I always insist on explaining them. And the ex-Untouchables usually were very open to these things being explained - but even so it seems to me quite inappropriate to use these sort of suttas as something to be recited on the occasion of a wedding, yeah. And if you insisted on explaining the meaning of them, well it became quite clear that the meaning was quite contrary to any idea of getting married. (Laughter.) Do you see what I mean? For instance in the case of the Mangala Sutta, well you'd come to this sort of word "tapochabrahamacaryacha" and you'd have to expand that on the occasion of someone's getting married which has nothing to do with brahmacarya at all. [110]

Do you see what I mean, eh?

: It's as though actually you...

S: So you can only sort of use them in that sort of way to the extent that you ignore the meaning, eh.

: It's actually the third fetter, isn't it?

S: Yes, you could say that.

: So obviously if you use this sutta in that way, you're indulging in ...

S: Well it would certainly be the third fetter if you thought that was the real use that was made of the sutta. Or that that meant that you were actually practising the Teaching. (Pause.) I don't know what the present practice is with regard to weddings in Maharashtra. And whether all these suttas are recited.

: Most of them probably, Bhante, I think.

S: Em, yes.

: Especially the Mahajayamangala practice.

S: Em, yes. Well that isn't a sutta, that is sort of non-canonical, isn't it?

: It seems to be a compilation of different parts of ...

S: Well no, that just is a summary of certain occasions on which the Buddha surmounted difficulties.

: Oh no, not that one, the ...

: The Jayamangalaatthagarbha

: That's the Jayamangalaatthagarbha, it's

S: Which one are you referring to?

: You actually recited this - the Mahajayamangalagatha.

S: Ah, right, yes. Yes, but the majority of these to the extent that they were Buddhist at all, even canonical, contain a Dharma teaching which is clearly meant to be practised. And you know the tendency, the danger is that people regard the recitation of these texts by somebody else as equivalent to their practising the teaching which they contain.

: It's the old Hindu approach,

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S: Indeed, yes. So I sort of tried to banish recitations of things of this sort from such occasions as the marriage and so on.

: Well I don't go to marriages.

(Laughter.)

: You don't do marriages?

: I won't supervise, I just sort of give them a quick blessing at the end.

S: But, you know, it's the same in a way even if you leave out the recitations of suttas because I performed or blessed or whatever you call it various marriages in England, there must have been five or six of them altogether I think, but each one became successively more and more unreal because, you know, what I started off by saying in India on such occasions, and continued in this country with due sincerity and all that was explaining to the newly married couple, well, why they were getting married, just in case they didn't understand, eh, (laughter) and saying well, you know', 'What is the meaning of, what does marriage mean in Buddhism?' and saying, well, 'You come together to help each other in your individual development, you come together, really, you know, to help each other gain Enlightenment'. So that was the Buddhist conception of marriage, you see this is what you should be trying to do, But then of course it dawned on me more and more that wasn't why they'd come together, (.laughter). That that was the last thing in fact that they were thinking about, I mean, it's OK you know to hear it said, and you know, it went on quite well, you say that, it sort of makes the whole thing seem really respectable (laughter), but actually it sort of dawned on me that what I'm saying is just not true, you know, they haven't come together for that purpose, and gloss it

over as I might try, I, just can't. You see what I, mean. You're just involving yourself in a sort of pretence. You know, they just happened to meet, and they become mutually infatuated, and in fact to the extent that they're mutually infatuated are quite incapable of evolving. They are not getting married to help each other in their spiritual development, I mean, they need all the help that they can get, they're quite unable to help each other, they're probably quite harmful for each other in that sort of way, In fact, if it's a question of spiritual development the more quickly they're separated the better. (Laughter) You shouldn't be tying the nuptial knot, you should be banishing them to separate quarter of the globe, eh. (Laughter.) You should be sending one to New Zealand and the other to Finland probably. (More laughter.) So I just became able to do it, you see this is it, that you could say that this in a way represented a sort of insight, eh, in this matter. I really became unable to do it any more, you know, I couldn't. People used to invite me and cajole me and beg me, but no, I just couldn't, it really stuck in my gullet, as they say. I don't mind sending a blessing, or 'May you be happy' sort of thing, 'but I don't think you will but anyway, never mind, I wish it; eh. (much laughter.) But I couldn't actually go there and say these words that, you well this is what the Buddhist marriage is all about, you are Buddhists, and because you're getting married it means you're coming together to help each other in your spiritual development. I mean, the last time I said the words, I just about got them out, but at the same [112] time I was thinking, 'What a load of rot!' (Laughter.) And I couldn't do it any more. Yeah? It's like, you know, just having to go on and bless somebody's guns and atom bombs and this is - and say, 'Well, I'm really glad to bless your guns and atom bomb, because this is all for the sake of peace' eh. You know very well it's not all for the sake of peace, so how could you bless it, eh.

: What are your feelings on baby namings and 'punyamodana'

S: I'm happier about naming babies, I still do that because, er ...

S: Well, because first of all I make it clear that it's not a Buddhist baby. You know, a baby is just a baby so far as I'm concerned, but it has been born into, er, you know, a positive group, it can't be born into a spiritual community because it's quite unaware of individuals as individuals, but it's been born into a positive group in as much as it's born among the 'Friends' and it's a useful opportunity of reminding people how to bring up the child as it were and remind them that it isn't a Buddhist, it is not a Buddhist baby, because you can't be a Buddhist simply you're born of Buddhist parents. So you could say when I perform the name giving ceremony, I'm not really functioning as individual, strictly speaking just functioning as a member of a positive group, say as a sort of senior or well known member of that positive group, not as an individual, tot as a member of the spiritual community, really, eh. But, you know, it is also necessary to function on that level for certain purposes, or on certain occasions, that is what I feel. I don't regard it as a strictly Buddhist occasion, I regard it as social rather than spiritual. But so far at least I have no objection to doing that, eh - it's relatively innocent, I think.

: It's similar with the 'punyanumodana'.

S: Ah, the 'punyanumodana' is in the sense of the after-death ceremony, this is quite a different matter because people are usually more serious minded on such occasions, and you can, you know, give a straightforward serious exposition of the Dharma ...

S: ... in memory of that departed person.

: What I'm thinking of is the ones that sort of take place one year, five years, or whatever, later.

S: Well again, if it's a discourse on the Dharma in memory of the departed person, fair enough. If people have got over his death and are not just clinging on to their memories of that person . And if you don't profess to be sending him to heaven more quickly, through your ceremonies, and chantings and so on. No I'd say the after-death ceremonies are the most Buddhistic of all and the least harmful, next the name giving, and I think it is really not

possible to regard a wedding as a Buddhist wedding, I really don't think that is seriously possible. (Pause.) I don't - I mean one might say, it's really very difficult to see how Buddhists, as Buddhists could get married at all, em. As Buddhists, yeah. Do you see what I mean?

[113]

: But didn't the Buddha give his blessing to some married couple at one point?

S: ... a 'jambunada'. He, I mean the Buddha, 'Wished that they might be happy. And because you wish that all beings might be happy. But that does not mean that you thereby give your specific approval to what they may be doing at this particular moment, or on this particular occasion, em. But you don't refuse to wish beings well, because they're not actually behaving at present in a very skilful manner.

: He attended Nanda's wedding feast, then walked off with him.

S: Em, that's true, yes.

: Nice one!

: Yeah, (chuckling).

S: But I mean to turn from the Buddhist scriptures to the Bible. I recently saw someone was, I mean there was a discussion about the Christian attitude towards marriage, and one writer, I forget who it was, a modern writer, quoted the, in the New Testament and said that Christ had attended, according to the scriptures, only one marriage, yeah, so this indicated a very limited approval of marriage, yes, so he attended once and that was in the scriptures, just to make it clear he didn't disapprove of it altogether. But it was very limited approval because he is only recorded as having ever attended one marriage feast.

: In the very early times of his travelling, I think.

: Changing (?) the water into wine.

S: Yes, yes. So you could say, well, then perhaps there is this record of the Buddha. Or we would have to examine and see, you know, whether it was really authentic, let us say; you know, this record of the Buddha attending the wedding feast. But there is after all only one record even of this nature. You see what I mean? So you've got hundreds of occasions on which the Buddha is giving discourses on the Dharma and inviting people to meditate, encouraging them to meditate, but he only puts in an appearance at one wedding at the most, so this would sort of indicate a certain sense of proportion, let us say.

: And he makes up for it too, on one occasion, by pinching the bridegroom, doesn't he?

S: Right, yes, yes. (Laughter.) But, you know, this raises the more general question of the attitude of the spiritual community to those activities of the group, or even the positive group, you know, which it cannot actually discourage in a way, or try to stop, but on the other hand which it sees quite clearly on the whole involves unskilful rather than skilful mental attitudes, and which therefore the spiritual community as such can't really get involved with. It's a question of, in a way, diplomacy to some extent, because you don't want to sort of give people the impression, when you're living in the midst of them, that you disapprove of just about practically everything they do. I mean, you know, that would create a sort of [114] antagonism and hostility between the group and the spiritual community; and then, you know, it would be difficult then for there to be a positive group.

: Yeah, I was about to say that, it would be part of the positive group.

S: For instance, if you go home to see your relations, well there's not much point in saying you regard watching the telly as a thoroughly unskilful activity, and as for bingo, well it really does put you beyond the pale, and of course you don't approve of drinking, and as for eating meat, well, you know, that's pretty reprehensible, and of course, you know, all this copulating that's going on, and marriage, you're thoroughly ... (laughter) disapproving of that too.

: Animals. (Laughter.)

S: ... disapproving of that too, and as for the pools, well you haven't a good word for them, and going to football matches, complete waste of an afternoon. Well, (laughing) well, it's true, that is what do think, yes, but you mustn't sort of spell it out in all that detail you have to exercise a certain tactful reserve.

: Ah! (laughter.)

S: You see what I mean? You wish them well, even though, you know, you disapprove of most of their activities; you mustn't develop a negative hostile attitude towards them, just because you - well, it's not a question of saying "Well, everybody must follow their own taste and what you do is just as valid as what I do", you don't believe that actually, at least you shouldn't, eh. It's not just a question of the difference of taste or difference of temperament. I mean, those activities are definitely unskilful, they don't contribute to the development of individuals, eh. So you really do disapprove of them, in a manner of speaking. You would not like to see people pursuing them, you'd rather they did something better. But, you know, you can't always be telling them this. You'll just antagonize them because they aren't going to change, most of them. So you have to keep up some sort of positive relationship with them not withstanding, if you possibly can.

: I've had on various occasions people sort of saying to me if ever I'm sort of followed, or sort of tried to become Buddhistic, would sort of - there would be, they'd sort of say, well there would be no children in the world and what have you.

S: That's true.

: Well, how would you get, how would you, er ... they'd say "Well all right, that's bad", and you'd, and what would you say to that?

: God!

S: I think one has to meet this sort of head on, you see, and say, well, supposing when one takes it in a very extreme form - that [115] you say, you tell your friends and relations you are never going to get married and you're not going to have any children. So they say "Ooh, well, if everybody did like you, the whole human race would come to an end", eh. Well, you know this assumes two things - assuming it to be possible. I mean you're making a big concession then, because you know perfectly well you ... The silly reply, though it's quite logical, is to say "Well, the fact that if everybody did it there would be an undesirable result is no reason for me not doing it", because you could say "Well, why I can't become a schoolteacher because, if everybody became schoolteachers, who'd work in the factory?" You see what I mean. Or, if I became a doctor, well, you know, er..."

: Yeah and that ...

S: ..."who would do the farming?"

: That's not so good because that means they'll say "Ah, well that's right then. If I became a Buddhist...(?)"

S: Ah, no but the logical structure of the argument is the same, yeah? They say that the fact that if everybody did what you propose to do is undesirable, means that you cannot do what

you want to do, or you should not do it. So the logical structure is the same when applied to what I have said, yeah. That it would not be a good thing for everybody to be a doctor, or whatever it was ...

: Well in that case ...

S: ... so therefore you, you could not be. That is quite a logical reply. This will only annoy them. (Laughter.) Because it's so logical, you see. But what you can do, you can make a more basic approach and say "Well, if the whole human race does come to an end, so what?" You know, there are two assumptions. One, that it is a good thing that the human race should continue. You're not supposed to argue that. Also, there is an assumption that energy can be destroyed, em. Ultimately what is the human race? I mean, the human race is a certain amount, let us say, of psycho-physical energy, taking various forms. So if that psycho-physical energy is denied certain outlets because people are no longer reproducing the species, from a Buddhist point of view it doesn't mean that that psycho-physical energy has been destroyed. It will take some other form. Just like any energy, when denied one particular outlet, it will take some other outlet. So you could say "Well, from our Buddhist point of view, if we don't allow that energy an outlet on the physical level it'll take another form, it'll find an expression on some higher level, may be on some heavenly level, and that will be much preferable." You see what I mean? So in that way there are those two assumptions. One, that it is a bad thing for the human race not to continue, that is supposed to be beyond argument. And two, that actually it would be possible to destroy the energy which is embodied in the human race.

: Yeah but you're saying that means people would sort of have to be born on a more heavenly level. Well, I thought the human level was the best level for developing Insight; and that a heavenly [116] level was not so good because It's too positive.

S: But I mean, you could say, that if everybody gave up producing children for that to be possible they would have to have developed an extraordinary degree of insight. So, you know, they would be reborn on this higher heavenly level, on a sort of 'Suddhavaśa' level, which is not only a higher realm, but also a level of insight, and they would be progressing along the way to Nirvana, eh.

: They'd all go to Sukhavati.

S: But, yes, but I think what you've got to challenge is people's unspoken assumptions. One, that it's a good thing for the human race to continue to exist, that if people didn't reproduce that would be an absolute end of the energy represented by the members of the human race, and so on. In other words it's just their lack of imagination you should attack. That there cannot be some quite different state of affairs.

: This actually came up quite recently, didn't it? In one part of the world everybody had gone to monasteries, and this particular tribe had almost become extinct, and they're sending specialists in, you know, fertility specialists, and everything to try and get them to procreate again. (Laughter.) I was amazed watching this programme that they were, they had actually bothered to do that.

S: Well, I saw something more amazing, with regard to America. This is in the same area, though a bit of a side-track, but never mind, eh - as we've more or less come to the end of the text. There was apparently what they regard as a problem, they've done a sort of survey - the sexual responses of the human male under certain circumstances; and they've come to the conclusion that the human male is not sexually stimulated by masculine competitive women with whom that male happens to be working. So, believe it or not, they regard this as a sort of symptom of some sort of illness which needs to be cured. (Laughter.) Do you see what I mean? In other words they don't seem able to see that if you are a normal healthy male, you're working with women, with women who look like men, and behave like men, and you're not sexually attracted by them, they're not able to see that this is perfectly ordinary and normal.

And that they're discussing now various forms of therapy so as to switch you on, so that you do get sexually stimulated by the masculine looking and masculine acting women with whom you happen to work in the office!

: Oh, no!

S: Because apparently, to be turned on only by young pretty women with whom you do not work in the office seems to be considered abnormal. (Laughter.) Well, I was told by someone whom I know, someone whom some of us know in fact, who was connected with psychotherapy or something of that sort, that she thought younger men really strange in our society and abnormal, because they were not attracted by old women. So, you know, we just get out of touch with ordinary biological realities, as it were. And many of the attitudes are sort of propagated by various groups interested by women's lib and feminism and all the rest of it. It seems extraordinary that people can be so blind and so stupid, eh. (Long Pause.) So, I mean [117] one of the things I have been saying lately Is one mustn't be apologetic when explaining the Dharma. One has really got to challenge people and not be sort of reduced to a sort of apologetic sort of presentation of Dharma.

: But to be able to do that you've really got to be clued up on it.

S: Oh yes, of course.

: Otherwise you've got to be apologetic.

S: Otherwise you really will - no, no, you mustn't even then you mustn't be apologetic, eh.

: No, no.

S: Just say "You'd better talk to my big brother". (Laughter.)

:He'll see if you're right.

S: But, you know, people sort of challenge you in a way and say to you "What's all this, this sort of"... - yeah, there are these two and selfishness. That being a Buddhist is selfish; this by people who are not exactly Bodhisattvas You know, the way they put it to you, it's as though every living being, is leading a life of complete unselfishness, except you, yeah. You miserable that you are, you want to be a Buddhist, eh. These all are the unselfish people. Men working night and day, completely unselfishly, to support their wives and children, mothers working the r fingers to the bone, night and day, to look after their husbands and their children. Pure disinterested selflessness, living for others, yeah, yeah (laughter); and there are the doctors, you know, looking after the sick, completely unselfishly, nurses nursing them, completely unselfishly, er, teachers teaching them, you know, out of pure love of knowledge and devotion to the ideals of education, politicians slaving night and day for the sake of the public feel, you know, serving the people, yeah. (Laughter.) Well, you're told this in India, the politicians tell you, that they spend their lives serving the people. Everybody is completely unselfish, shopkeepers opening the shops so many hours a day, standing behind the counter, rendering a public service, providing people with things they need, so unselfish. But you, you selfish rat, (laughter) you to get away into the country, go out on retreat and meditate, what could be more selfish than that? You know, this is what one is told, this is the sort of impression that one is given, yeah. So you just mustn't let them get away with it, eh. The assumption is that they are all unselfish, that the ordinary worldly person is leading a very unselfish life, and you're the selfish one. So you should challenge that.

: I had a lovely example of this in Poona. People, one of the rumours going round about us, or one of the things trying to bring us down, was that we'd left out the fifth precept, eh, as to accommodate the West. So that people could drink and be Buddhists, it was a compromise. I heard one of our friends, who I won't name, he hauled me up on this; and I happened to know that he drank. So [118] I said, "It's strange, er, most of the people who criticize on this

themselves drink". It really got him. Actually made him furious, but because I was in robes he couldn't actually be angry with me. (Laughter.) He took it out on other people around. (Laughter.)

S: Yes, yes.

: Black eye.

S: Yeah, and then escapism, that: Buddhism is escapism, what I mean, what are they doing? I mean, what are they doing when they sit in front of their tellys, eh? Etcetera, etcetera, yeah. So it seems such effrontery, you know, such cheek, that they try to take us to task, in this sort of way, yeah? So I think we should really let them have it, eh.

: Makes you really wild in fact.

S: Yes, indeed.

: I mean, in a sense, you know, that you have a feeling that you're right, that you're doing the right thing by practising the Dharma, studying it, practising it, and going on retreat. The life you're living. I mean, you feel you are doing the right thing.

S: Well, that's fine, but, you know, supposing other people are trying to make you feel in the wrong? Then you have to put up some sort of resistance and depending on the sort of society that you live in, or the sort of family that you've got, there may be more or less of this sort of thing.

: Yeah, I don't have any...

S: ... pressure.

S: Right.

S: Some of our friends may have this, huh?

: You don't want people running around with these sort of micchaditthis anyway.

S: We have friends not very closely connected with us, but definitely friends, you know, who can hardly breathe a word about Buddhism to their wives, or mention that they would like to go on retreat, it would meet with such protests and such accusations of selfishness and neglect of the family and all that sort of thing. I remember in my very early days, I might have mentioned this on some occasion, when I was at Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, there was a very faithful friend coming along. He was a friend with a small 'f' of course, there was no FWBO then. He was a very nice, inoffensive chap about thirty five, may be late thirties about thirty seven and he was very meek, worked in an office somewhere. And he'd never married, always wore a suit, never said very much but he was quite a devoted Buddhist. He lived at home with his mother. He'd [119] never left home and was, apparently, very attached to his mother. But, he didn't dare to tell her that he was a Buddhist or that he went to Buddhist meetings because he knew she would be so much against it so he said he kept all his Buddhist books in a locked cupboard in his room, huh? and, you know, just as though it was pornography and he said in the evenings when she'd gone to bed held lock the door of his room and then unlock his cupboard and read his Buddhist books, yes. (Laughter.) And, you know, she did not know that he went to a Buddhist lecture on Sunday afternoon. He'd just say he was going out for a walk or he was going to see a friend. He didn't dare to say that he was going to attend a Buddhist meeting'. There is quite a bit of that sort of thing in England, huh? I mean, you don't get it usually in the case of people connected with the FWBO but there are other Buddhist groups where they've got a lot of members of this type, yeah.

: We've had quite a few young people actually been stopped coming along by their parents

probably, in their eyes they were getting too involved in another cult.

S: How old are they?

: About seventeen?

S: Anyway, their parents can't stop them much longer. (Pause.)

If it was a football match or even going to the pub, if they could get in, I mean, they probably wouldn't mind, heh? Or, you know, filling in the pools coupons or, you know, going off on motorbikes, probably be reasonably happy.

: It's all that sort of cult business.

S: There is that too.

: I think it's mainly the fact that the parents just don't know what ...

S: Yes, but I mean when this question of cult comes up I also get quite annoyed then. Because you get on the radio, for instance, in you know discussion programmes, all sorts of references to all cults, usually by Christians, huh? But the thing they accuse the cults of doing they're the things that the churches are doing all the time on a grand scale. I mean to say, for instance, one of the things they are accused of is brain washing, yeah? Well, who is doing the brain washing? Aren't they doing the brain washing in the schools? Aren't they doing it through the radio and the TV? You know as they accuse you of brain washing, well this may be true of certain groups, let us say. We need not deny that but we don't brain wash. In fact it's the very opposite we're trying to do. We encourage people to think for themselves. We encourage them to be individuals. Who else is doing that? Hardly anybody but you know, people step a bit out of line, as it were, and they accuse you of brain washing, yeah?... So the churches of all people. It's like the Catholic Church now does bleating about human rights. Why they ought to hide their heads in the sand in shame, you know, I mean look at their human rights record. It's only just now that they're talking about human [120] rights ... burned at the stake until a few years ago for mentioning human rights, you know, in opposition to the Church. You have no rights against the Church and that was their teaching. It's still their teaching actually. They put it in this way, error has no rights against truth. So don't let them get away with it. I mean, if people say, you know, Buddhism is a cult or Buddhist group is a cult, say well Buddhism started five hundred years before Christianity. We're not a cult, we're something much bigger than that, something much better than that. And if it comes to someone being a cult, well what about you? Christianity is just a big cult, in the worst possible sense.

: Some people of course you just can't get through-to,

S: No, that's true.

: You're not going to make them happy by telling them how you feel.

S: No, but you can certainly make it clear that you have got a quite afferent point of view otherwise you're trying to justify yourself accepting their assumptions. So you should make it quite clear you do not accept their assumptions. No, as I said a few minutes ago, you do not accept their assumptions that the continuation of the human race is necessarily a good thing or the best thing, yeah?

: It's not helping them grow leaving them with all these wrong views.

S: Right, yes. So, at least, if you challenge them and shock them a bit even though they may not agree with you, they probably won't, but it at least will make them aware that you see things in a quite different way and have a different set of assumptions and that may in the

long run start them thinking even, but they won't start thinking if they believe that you share the same assumptions as them, huh? But that you've simply gone astray in your reasoning from those common assumptions.

: I think you've got to be quite careful though, it's like, going back a little bit in our discussion about hammering someone all the time for what they're doing wrong or what you feel like about watching TV all the time, going to football matches.

S: No, the situation is different because originally I was referring to when you go home and say, see your relations and friends. If they don't make a point of the rightness of, if they say, 'Oh, you know, bingo is much better than Buddhism!' You know, bingo does more for the individual than Buddhism! Well then, you have to argue it out with them, yeah? But if they're simply, you know, following what they want to do without trying to compel you to acknowledge that what they are doing is the best and the greatest, well keep quiet, But if they insist on an argument then you must challenge them, yeah? You see what I mean? That is different then. (Pause.) Then you can hammer them as much as you like. They've asked for it, because they've tried to hammer you. Why should you put up with that?

S: Especially when they, well another favourite one is they accuse you [121] of intolerance in being a Buddhist and insisting on meditating and not eating meat. You're being very intolerant of those who don't do these things, huh?. (Pause.) I've heard this one repeatedly that Buddhists are very intolerant especially FWBO Buddhists. They are the most intolerant of all. (Laughter.)

: Something I rather feel people are confusing you merely stating your opinions as being intolerant to other people.

S: Yes. If you differ or disagree, that is intolerance. Buddhism...

: It's a threat, isn't it?

: It's a threat basically towards Christianity or Christian groups.

: Other Buddhist groups.

: Yeah, other Buddhist groups and marriages, the marriage situation.

: They find it threatening, it doesn't fit in with the group view.

S: So they would like you to say, either to apologise for what you're doing and say well it's just my weakness or say well it's just a difference of taste. Yeah? I'm just doing what I like to do that is no more valid than what you're doing but you're doing just what you like to do, it's all the same. Or they like you to say, especially in India, that what we're doing is really the same there's no real difference, huh?

: It's the fact that you have an alternative point of view that irritates not what that view is.

S: Yes. No it is alternative, different, yeah?

: They talk about intolerance if they had the power they'd lock you up anyway.

S: Yes, indeed. Well, they might try to do it even now. (Laughter.)

: When I was living at home before I came over here, everyone else in the family used to eat meat at the table and I sort of used to pass comments on it. (Laughter.) And they got quite sort of mad at me for, sort of, continually telling them. They reckoned it wasn't Buddhist at all, that I should tell them that they shouldn't eat meat. Things like that. I sort of felt quite bad at times because I was sort of hurting their feelings by telling them not to eat meat.

S: But sometimes one can't avoid that if you really do feel that what they're doing is unskilful and bad for me, yeah. You see what I mean? It's not just a question of difference of opinion on some highly abstract matter that doesn't have any practical consequences, you know, it is one's way of life and if you feel for people [122] well naturally you will try to convince them, you know, that what they're doing is unskilful because you see it's harming them, um? But, anyway, clearly you have to do it tactfully out of real concern for them, not just trying to impose your ideas upon them, so to speak eh? But you can't help speaking up sooner or later especially when, say, you're living at home and you really feel people are living very unskilfully. You can't help saying something to them. But you have to be quite careful especially with relations who, especially those who have known you all your life and who remember when you were very small. It's very difficult for them to take what you say seriously. (Murmurs of assent.) They'll try and dismiss it by saying 'Oh, what do you know! You know, ten years ago what were you, just running around in knickerbockers and there you are trying to tell me what's what'.

: I think that, what I have found is the danger, is that communication gets cut off, Yeah, because of this you have, you know, you stand up for what you feel but quite often I find now well I just want to be able to communicate and sometimes I just try and communicate.

S: I think when one goes back into, say, the family situation, as one goes on a visit, I think one should be very cautious not to criticize or disagree with anything unless challenged until you've established a good communication. I think that is quite important.

: I think there's another side to this, you'll get a challenge because people want to test you. They want to see whether you actually are genuine (?) particular phase and once they've found and accepted that you are genuine, they will accept you with your alternative point of view. It's quite good to take these challenges on.

S: Anyway, any further point about the text before we close? We seem to have covered it reasonably thoroughly. (Pause.)

: The only thing I don't the second verse doesn't seem to fit in. Everything else seems I accept your explanation...

S: Ay, yes. I thought that at the time. I wondered whether it had been sort of added in. I couldn't help feeling that or thinking that. It could have been, it's not impossible.

: May be it was added in to fit in with that story of Ananda going off and ...

S: That's true, yes, that's true.

: Trying to appease the spirits.

S: Yeah. (Pause.) You could say, I mean, you could regard the first two verses and the last three as being as it were, added. Because the verses in between stand separately without any difficulty at all. It's almost though they've been edited for, you know, those sort of purposes, just by the addition of those extra verses at the beginning and at the end. It's like in the case of the Jataka stories, we know the 'verse portions are ancient and original And the stories were added later and don't always fit the verses. It's the same with the [123] Udana, the first portions which are later don't always fit the gatha or verse portions which are earlier, yeah?

: May be those, I mean the first two verses and the last three, sort of put it in a context, don't they? They just give it a beginning and an end.

S: Right, yes. But you could even so dispense with that second verse. (Pause.)

: In those last three verses they talk about the accomplished Buddha, accomplished Dharma, etc.

S: Ah, what's the word?

: It seems to be 'Tathagatha'.

S: Ah, the one who has attained, accomplished in that sense. Yeah.

: So what that would be 'Salute the Tathagata'.

S: Yes, it is ... Tathagata. "Tathagatam devamanussapujitam", yes it means the 'thus come' or the 'thus gone' one. The one who has attained thus, huh? Therefore, you could say the Accomplished One. The One who has Attained, who has Accomplished, yeah? Achieved. Accomplished One is not a very good translation of 'Tathagata'. I think 'Tathagata' is one of those words which can't really be translated.

: It seems to be quoted for each of the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

S: It's the structure of the Pali which is quite complex. (Pause.) You quote, take it as the Tathagata and the Dharma, though land' is not actually there but land' is very often implied. (Long Pause.) You could also say it really refers to the Buddha but so often they, you know, one has a threefold recitation just changing Buddha to Dharma, then to Sangha, and they have done that without strict regard to the meaning or the grammar, one could look at it in that way, yeah?

: "suvatthi hutu ti" seems to be

S All right? Nearly tea-time. OK, (Murmurs of 'thank you, Bhante'), fine, good. It has to get edited now doesn't it?

END OF SEMINAR