General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

Samannaphala Sutta (Digha-Nikaya) (The Fruits of the Life of a Recluse)

Held in two parts at:
(1) Padmaloka - 17th-18th July 1982
(2) Sukhavati - 15th August 1982

Those present: Urgyen Sangharakshita, Upasakas Ruchiraketu, Ratnaketu, and Duncan Stein, David Keefe, Daren DeWitt, Paul Lynch.

Occasion: Friends Building Service Study Group

Text: A.A.G. Bennett's translation published as Long Discourses of the Buddha (Chetana Publications Ltd, Bombay)

Day 1 - 17th July - Tape 1 - Side One (Voice Prints)

S: Let me just say a few words about the text generally, first. Everybody knows, I think, that the Buddhist scriptures, as we call them in English, are based on an oral tradition, that is to say, the Buddha himself did not write anything. The Buddha himself taught orally, by word of mouth, and his teaching was passed down orally, by word of mouth, for several generations. And it was only 300 or 400 years after the parinirvana of the Buddha that things started to be written down at all. So we don't really have books, we have literary versions of oral traditions. Some of these oral traditions seem to have been earlier than others, even though they might have all been written down around the same period. But the work that we are going to study today and tomorrow - that is to say, the Samannaphala Sutta - this is from the Digha-Nikaya, which as an oral tradition goes back probably, if not to the time of the Buddha himself, very, very near.

The Digha-Nikaya itself is made up of 32 suttas. And some of these suttas seem to be based on an older oral tradition than others, and some parts of some suttas seem to be based on oral traditions on which some other parts, even of the same sutta, are based. Do you get the idea? (murmurs of acknowledgement) It's as though each sutta is sometimes a sort of composite work. Sometimes quite old traditions are sort of woven in with somewhat later ones, and the whole thing is elaborated into something which is eventually written down as a sort of literary work. So we have to distinguish sometimes between [2] the older and the later material, though the Digha-Nikaya is based on quite old oral traditions - oral traditions that go back probably to the time of the Buddha, even though a certain amount of editing and recasting has also been carried out.

So the Samannaphala Sutta seems to be based on some very old material indeed - even though the present sort of form of the sutta may be the work of the editors, so to speak, of the Digha-Nikaya, though even those editors worked when the transmission was still oral. You can imagine the monks getting together and rehearsing what they knew, reciting what they knew, and deciding to shape it in a particular way, repeat certain things, or even add in certain things which seemed important - which they thought the Buddha must have said because he had said them on occasions - but they weren't actually mentioned on this occasion. So they added them in for the sake of completeness. All that sort of editorial work was done long before the sutta was actually written down in the present form.

But the main point here is that we do go back, quite a long way back, to the days of the Buddha. And the general trend of the teaching certainly goes back to the Buddha himself - we can be quite sure of that - even though certain details may have been added or elaborated later on.

Digha-Nikaya, incidentally, means collection of long discourses. The Digha-Nikaya is the first of the five nikayas which make up the Sutta Pitaka. There is a collection of long discourses - there are 32; a collection of medium length discourses - 152; then a collection of passages dealing with the same subjects, roughly - that's the Samyutta-Nikaya, 'Kindred Sayings'; then a collection of sayings which deal with one thing, then two things, three things, four things, that's the Anguttara-Nikaya; and then there's a nikaya called miscellaneous, the Khuddaka-Nikaya - containing 14 books of very different types and very different ages - though of course originally they weren't books, or most of them weren't originally books: they also were oral traditions. Here you find such works as the Sutta Nipata, Dhammapada, Jataka, Udana. Some very old, some very recent, material. So these five nikayas make up the Sutta Pitaka.[3]

Then you've the Vinaya-Pitaka, 'Collection of Discipline', and the Abhidhamma-Pitaka, 'Collection of Higher Teaching'. These three pitakas make up, of course, the Pali canon, of course handed down in - or written down in - what we call Pali, which is not strictly speaking the name of a language. That's one particular version. Other versions were written down in Sanskrit and other languages. Most of them don't survive, but we do have the whole of the Pali canon. It's the only complete early Buddhist collection to have survived. So it is of some special importance.

Anyway, we'll go on to the Samannaphala Sutta. Would someone like to read that first paragraph, and then we'll just discuss it? You can go round, if you like.

Ruchiraketu: 'Ajatasattu, raja of Magadha and son of the Vedeha princess, moved with the beauty of a festive full-moon night, asked his ministers to suggest a samana or brahman whom they might visit to satisfy their minds. The names of the well-known teachers and expounders of doctrines were put forward - Purana, Kassappa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesa-kambala, Kaccayana, Sanjaya, Belatthi, and Nigantha Nataputta - but the raja gave no response to the suggestions. Then Jivaka, the Raja's physician, proposed the Samana Gotama who was staying in the Mango Grove with a large company of bhikkhus. Gotama, said the physician, was reported to be an Arahat, fully Enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, happy, wise as to the worlds, an incomparable guide to man's self-mastery, a teacher of devas and men, a Buddha, an Exalted One'.

S: So the story, so to speak, starts off with Ajatasattu. Ajatasattu was the son of Bimbisara, the king of Magadha. And Bimbisara had been a friend and disciple of the Buddha since his very early days. You may remember in the Sutta-Nipata there is a very short sutta, the Pabbajja Sutta, where Bimbisara, then only a young man, but king, sees the Buddha, who hasn't yet become the Buddha, coming in the distance. And sends one of his men just to check where the Buddha is going, and then visits the Buddha, up on Vulture's Peak. You remember this episode? It is said that the Buddha was then in the prime of life and Bimbisara was also in the prime of life - they were about the same age. So their connection, their friendship even, dates [4] from those days. Even before the Buddha's Enlightenment. So they were in contact from time to time. There are quite a number of suttas in the Pali canon which mention

different meetings between the Buddha and Bimbisara.

So in some ways there is a bit of a parallel between their careers, because in the same way that the Buddha had difficulties with Devadatta, who tried to kill the Buddha when he was an old man - in the same way Bimbisara had difficulties with his son, the crown prince who was Ajatasattu, who in the end did manage to kill his father and seize the throne.

So when this sutta begins, the Buddha is still alive, Bimbisara is dead, and Ajatasattu is king. So one mustn't forget this background that Ajatasattu has succeeded to the throne by murdering his own father, so he doesn't have a very comfortable conscience about that.

So this 'Ajatasattu, Raja of Magadha and son of the Vedeha princess, moved with the beauty of a festive full-moon night, asked his ministers to suggest a samana or brahman whom they might visit to satisfy their minds'.

In India you often find, especially after the rainy season, that the night is very brilliant. The full moon is very bright. I wouldn't say it's as bright as daylight, but you can certainly read a book by moonlight very easily; and usually, or very often, people don't feel like going to bed. They don't feel like going to sleep. They don't feel, you know, like doing the things that they usually do during the day. They don't feel like working, or anything like that. But, on the other hand, they don't feel like going to bed and going to sleep. They feel like, you know, visiting their friends, or just going for a walk in the park or something of that sort. So this is the sort of scene which one is to imagine here. It's a beautiful full-moon night and Ajatasattu doesn't want to go to sleep. He's very moved by the beauty of the night, because there's a very strange sort of atmosphere, you know, in India when it's this particular time of year and it's the full moon. It's quite a magical sort of atmosphere and people are quite affected by it sometimes. So this seems to have been the case with Ajatasattu.[5]

So he seems to have thought it would be a good idea if he could pay a visit to some religious teacher. It seems to him a suitable occasion to go and see some religious teacher, some spiritual, you know, personality. Either a samana or a brahman. Do you understand the distinction between these two terms? Do you know what a samana is, or was?

Paul: No.

S: 'Samana' is Pali, 'sramana' is Sanskrit. Literally it means someone who is washed, someone who is purified, and it's used in the sense of a follower of non-Vedic religions or spiritual traditions. You know about the Vedas? The Vedas were the scriptures of orthodox Hinduism, as we call it now, and in the Buddha's day many people were still following the Vedas; they were still performing the rituals, the sacrifices, based on the Vedas; they were still observing the caste system, you know, derived from the Vedas. But there were some who didn't accept the Vedas, who didn't follow the Vedic teachings, rejected sacrifices, rejected the caste system. They were more independent, more freelance, and they were called samanas. They gave up not only the Vedas, you know, not only the sacrifices and caste system, but they gave up ordinary household life itself. They went forth as wanderers. So they were called samanas, and the Buddha started off, of course, as a samana. This is why he is often referred to in Buddhist literature as the mahasamanna or mahashramana, the great sramana, because he became more famous than any of the other samanas.

And then, of course, you had the brahmins, the brahmin teachers: those who still followed the Vedas, performed sacrifices, observed - you know - the caste system, and so on. So there were these two classes of teachers in the Buddha's day. You might describe them as the orthodox and the unorthodox - that is to say orthodox from the Vedic point of view. The Buddha himself, of course, belongs to the unorthodox class.[6]

So, very often, brahmana and samana are referred to, or brahman and samana. Sometimes they are joined together to make a sort of compound word, meaning religious teachers of all kinds - orthodox and unorthodox.

So Ajatasattu, moved with the beauty of a festive full-moon night, asked his ministers to suggest a samana or brahman whom they might visit to satisfy their minds. He didn't mind whether it was a Vedic teacher, orthodox teacher, or anti-Vedic teacher, an unorthodox one. He just wanted to visit some religious teacher, some spiritual teacher, who would be able to satisfy their minds. This is quite a significant phrase. What does it suggest about Ajatasattu - and possibly other people?

Ruciraketu: That he was a bit dissatisfied.

S: Mmm. That he was a bit dissatisfied. He felt the need of some kind of, well, almost, consolation. So 'The names of the well-known teachers and expounders of doctrines were put forward,' you know, by different people surrounding him. 'Purana, Kassappa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita, Kesa-kambala, Kaccayana, Sanjaya Belatthi, and Nigantha Nataputta - but the Raja gave no response to the suggestions.' Who these teachers were, and what they taught, we shall see later on in the sutta. But these were the six famous teachers, in the Buddhas's day, apart from the Buddha himself. They are often mentioned. This list of six is often mentioned in the Pali texts. They all had a particular point of view, which will be explained later on, so we don't need to go into it now. 'But the Raja gave no response to the suggestions.' We'll find out why that was later on.

'Then Jivaka, the Raja's physician, proposed the samana Gotama who was staying in the Mango Grove with a large company of bhikkhus.' So Jivaka, who was the physician, the doctor of the king, and therefore very close to him, mentioned that the samana Gotama, or Gotama the Buddha as we say, was staying in the Mango Grove nearby. The Buddha [7] - you probably know - travelled from place to place on foot. And he stayed at various rest-houses and hermitages which had been built for him by his admirers and, you know, supporters and devotees, and these were usually situated on the outskirts of big cities, two or three miles from the gates, in parks and gardens which people had built at some distance from the city, so that they could retire to them from time to time. You get the idea. Why was it important that the viharas, as we call them now, should be so near to the city? Why didn't the Buddha sort of seclude himself in the mountains somewhere?

Ruciraketu: So he could communicate.

S: So he could communicate with people. But not only that, of course. The bhikkhus in those days had to rely for their food on alms. They had to go on a daily begging round. So that meant they couldn't move too far away, you know, from the cities to be quiet and peaceful, but near enough for the bhikkhus to be able to go in once a day to collect their food, and for the people who lived in the towns and cities to walk out - maybe in the evening - to visit the

Buddha, or to visit his disciples, you know, to hear some teaching.

So on this occasion the Buddha was staying in the Mango Grove. Probably just in some little cottages or huts which had been put up there for him and his disciples. And Gotama, said the physician, was reported to be 'an arahat, fully enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, happy, wise as to the worlds, an incomparable guide to man's self-mastery, a teacher of devas and men, a Buddha, an Exalted One'. Do you recognize these words? Have you encountered them before?

Voices: Umm...

S: This is the 'Iti'pi so bhagava'.

Ratnaketu: It's in the Ti Ratana Vandana.[8]

S: It's the sort of standard, stock passage. I mean I mentioned that the Pali scriptures are based on oral traditions. And in these oral traditions there are lots of repetitions. You find, even now, in the Pali scriptures, that many passages occur again and again, and this is one of them. The Vandana, as we call it, occurs in many passages in the Pali canon - hundreds of places, in fact. Wherever a description of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is required, well, then you get the Ti Ratana Vandana, hmm? It may not have been that on each occasion those were exactly the words said, but everything became a bit standardized, even a bit stereotyped. As the monks recited it over and over again they tended to make everything a bit uniform. Do you see what I mean? So you get the same description of sila, you get the same description of the dhyanas, hmm? Wherever a mention is made of this subject or that, the stock description is usually inserted. So it's the same with this particular formula of the description of the qualities of the Buddha, hmm? I won't go into these in detail because we did have a whole seminar on these, which has been edited and printed. You can consult that for a detailed understanding of all these expressions. Anyway, carry on and read this next paragraph.

Duncan: 'The Raja, proceeding with his retinue to the Mango Grove, was so astonished to find complete calm and silence in the immediate vicinity of a place where, as he had understood, several hundreds of people had foregathered, that he suspected a plot. However, reassured by Jivaka, he continued.'

S: You remember that Jivaka, the raja's physician, proposed the samana Gotama who was staying in the Mango Grove with a large company of bhikkhus. So, 'the Raja Ajatasattu, on proceeding with his retinue to the Mango Grove, was so astonished to find complete calm and silence in the immediate vicinity of a place where, as he had understood, several hundreds of people had foregathered, that he suspected a plot.' I mean the raja went there, went with a number of people, got deeper and [9] deeper into the forest, but, though he had been told that there were hundreds of bhikkhus with the Buddha, there wasn't a sound. He couldn't understand it. There were supposed to be hundreds of people there - but no sound. No noise at all. So he became suspicious. He thought it was a plot because, after all, he'd seized the throne from his own father. Maybe his son, some other person - was going to seize it from him. You see the state of mind of the politician or the person who lives by violence. They suspect - all the time.

'However, reassured by Jivaka, he continued,' and eventually, of course, he comes to the place

where the Buddha was staying. This also tells us something about the bhikkhus, doesn't it. What's that?

Ratnaketu: They were quiet. (chuckles)

S: Quiet, yes. Of course, they weren't always like that. It took the Buddha quite a lot of time and trouble to get them like that. (laughter) Yes. Because there are other occasions where the Buddha is very annoyed and displeased with the behaviour of the bhikkhus because on their arrival at a new place they're talking and shouting and arranging things (laughter) and their bedding and their bowls (laughter) and how they are going to stay and where they are going to stay - there's such a hubbub that the Buddha becomes really disgusted and says that it just sounds like a market of women selling fish (laughter), rather than an assembly of bhikkhus. So it took the Buddha quite a lot of time and trouble to train, you know, the bhikkhus in this way. You mustn't suppose they were always like this. Not all of them, anyway. But here it's near the end of the Buddha's career. Maybe the bhikkhus, too, are pretty old. Maybe some of them are arahants. Anyway, so now things are more or less as they should be. They're very, very quiet. Even though there are hundreds of them staying with the Buddha, there is not a sound to be heard, and, of course, that makes the king, Ajatasattu, highly suspicious - but he is reassured by Jivaka, yes? [10] Apparently he trusts Jivika. After all, if you're a king in ancient India and you can't even trust your own physician, well, who can you trust? In ancient times, very, very often, under different kings, the physician was very important, even with political power, political influence, because he had direct access to the king. He used to have to prescribe medicines for the king. You could bribe the doctor to poison the king. There were all those sorts of possibilities. So the doctor had to be someone who was very faithful to the king, who could be trusted, who was in his confidence. And very often, you know, the king's doctor, or king's physician, was used for other purposes too - political purposes, or diplomatic purposes.

So, anyway, here he is with the king, escorting the king, and reassuring the king, 'It's not a plot. People aren't laying in wait here to assassinate you. It's just the Buddha and his disciples. Just sitting very, very quietly.' In fact they were meditating. So, I mean, they were also enjoying, you might say, the beauty of the full-moon night. They were taking advantage of the opportunity to meditate, you know, sitting there out in the open air, under trees. So they weren't making any sound. All right, carry on.

Ratnaketu: 'The Raja Ajatasattu, son the Vedeha princess, having bowed to the Exalted One, raised folded hands and bowed to the company of bhikkhus, sat down to one side, and said, "I should like to ask the Exalted One something, and if he permits, to explain the question." "Ask, Maharaja, whatever you wish."'

S: You notice that the Raja Ajatasattu, son of the Vedeha princess, 'having bowed to the Exalted One,' I mean, this is the ancient Indian tradition, that religious teachers or spiritual personalities are respected by everybody - from the king downwards. They may not always follow their advice, but they always show their respect - and this is true even today in India. Not only does he bow to the Buddha, but to the company, the sangha of bhikkhus. And he 'sat down to one side'. This is polite. This is sort of Indian etiquette. Indian etiquette is that, in front of a religious teacher, you don't sit immediately in front of him, facing him, as though to do a communication exercise. You sit to one side. To face him is considered not polite, because it assumes a sort of equality and you don't, you know, regard yourself as his equal, so

you sit to one side. Even today this is very often observed. And then he says, 'I should like to ask the Exalted One something, and if he permits, to explain the question.' One of the things you notice, reading through the Pali scriptures, as we call them, is that, in ancient India, people seem to have been very polite. The language is always polite. It's never rough or harsh. People are very courteous, very refined in their way of dealing with one another. So [11] Ajatasattu, even though he's a king, he says, 'I should like to ask the Exalted One something, and if he permits, to explain the question.' He doesn't sort of ask his question straight off. He asks permission to put the question, and says that if he's allowed he'll explain the question also. So this sort of politeness, this sort of refinement, you find throughout the Pali canon.

And then the Buddha says, 'Ask, Maharaja, whatever you wish.' So what is the Raja's question? Someone like to read that whole paragraph 14?

Daren: 'Craftsmen such as the following, mahouts, horsemen, fighting men of all branches of the service and of all ranks, slaves and the lower orders, hairdressers, bath-attendants, sweepers, garland-makers, washermen, weavers, basket-makers, potters, accountants, stampers, each having become proficient in his particular line are supported, here amongst the things as seen in the present existence and belonging to this life, by the fruit of his trade. With it these people make happy and comfortable themselves, their parents, wives and children, friends and fellow-workers. Making donations to samanas and brahmans they promote their own spiritual welfare, creating a resultant of happiness conducive to a future happy state. Is it possible, sir, to declare of the life of a recluse, fruits occurring in the same way, evident amongst things as seen in the present existence and belonging to this life?'

S: So Ajatasattu is putting a very important question. But what is that question, basically, what is he basically asking?

Ratnaketu: What is the advantage of becoming a recluse?

S: Yes, What is the advantage of becoming a recluse? He is asking for something, well, positive, we might say, something tangible, to be indicated. He's saying that, in the case of all these different people who are following these different trades and occupations there is a definite result. There is something tangible brought about, because of their following that particular trade or occupation. They can benefit themselves and their families. They have something left over for other people. And by making offerings to samanas and brahmans, from what they've earned, they can acquire merit and they can go to heaven after death. So what is the benefit, what is the result, what is the fruit of the life of the recluse?

The word for recluse of course is 'samana'. The title of the sutta is the 'Samannaphala. 'Samana' is more like 'Recluse-hood'. 'What is the fruit of Recluse-hood, or recluse-ship?' Recluse is not really a very good translation of 'samana'. We don't really have a better one because a samana isn't or wasn't a recluse, because he was in contact with other people, if only through his begging round. But as I've mentioned earlier, samana suggests a sort of freelance religious or spiritual person in the Buddha's day, not following the orthodox Vedic tradition.

So people like the king might wonder, 'what is the meaning and purpose of this life?' [12] Here are these people, they've given up worldly life, they've left home, left their wives and children, they don't have any trade or occupation, they just go wandering from place to place.

What is the fruit of this life? What is the benefit? But in a way the question goes even deeper than that. How do you think that is? Well you see it suggests the need of an objective criterion of success. There is, for instance, take a garland maker. You see in the case of various trades and professions that are mentioned there is an objective criterion of success. Well what is the criterion of being a successful garland-maker? All right. You make good garlands. You sell plenty of them. You make money. With that money you support yourself and your family. There is an objective criterion of success. In the same way, Ajatasattu is suggesting through his question there should be an objective criterion of success for the sramana. There should be a fruit, which should be perceptible, which should be tangible. So what is that fruit of this particular trade, so to speak? We don't see anything. We just see these people wandering about. Just living off the land, so to speak. So what is the fruit? What is the benefit for themselves and for others? So this brings us to a quite important question in the spiritual life. What is the result? What is the fruit? What is the benefit?

I mean sometimes people have compared, say, doing something like karate with the spiritual life in general. If you're doing karate, if you are learning karate, well, you know, there is an objective criterion of success. What is that?

Ruchiraketu: You go through getting your grading belts...

S: You get your gradings. You have to show what you can do in the dojo. There's a definite objective criterion in accordance with which you can be either passed or rejected. But what is the positive criterion that you are getting on with your spiritual life? That is not usually so tangible is it? And you could say, 'Well, I'm feeling all right', sort of thing, but is that enough? (laughter) So this is also the sort of thing that Ajatasattu is getting at. What is the objective criterion? Because when you ask for a fruit, you suggest that there is an objective criterion in accordance with which you can determine that there is a fruit, or not a fruit, of this particular way of life. So it is quite an important question that he is asking, a question that goes very ... quite, quite deep.

Incidentally, he mentions so many different kinds of people forming so many different trades and occupations; 'mahouts, horsemen, fighting men of all branches of the service and of all ranks, slaves and the lower orders, hairdressers, bath-attendants, sweepers, garland-makers, washermen, weavers, basket-makers, potters, accountants, stampers' - all there! So [13] what does this suggest? What does all that tell you, that list? What does it tell you about the society?

Ratnaketu: It was quite a sort of developed ...

S: It was quite developed. In other parts of the Pali canon there are even longer and more elaborate lists of all sorts of trades and occupations. So we do get an impression of a very complex, quite complex, quite refined, quite highly civilized society existing in those days. We tend to think of pre-technological societies as backward, but they're only backward in the sense that they didn't have modern technology. They had everything else and maybe a lot more that we don't have any more nowadays. So that the Buddha - just as a reminder - the Buddha lived in a very highly civilized epoch. The fact that people speak so politely and treat one another with such courtesy, this suggest quite a high level of culture, doesn't it? In the Pali canon you don't find usually people speaking rudely or roughly to one another. If you do find them speaking in that way, its held up as a sort of example of how not to speak, how not

to treat ether people, and it is not approved of.

David: There seem to be two things here that came to my mind. The first is this man speaks very politely but he's killed his father. The second thing is that the list doesn't include the king. Is there any significance in that? I cannot see any reference to his own position.

S: Well that might be significant because very often people do ask about other people but they don't include themselves.

Ratnaketu: What is his objective criterion of success?

S: Well perhaps he considers it self-evident that he is in possession of the kingdom. Everybody knows what the king's job is, what the criterion of success is. Well, you have got the throne!

David: It seems to suggest to me that perhaps, well what you said before, the dissatisfaction. He's been a very goal-orientated person. He's achieved what he thought was his goal, but he feels...

S: Yes indeed. I mean and he's got power. That is what he was after. But perhaps he isn't fully satisfied. Well clearly he's uneasy in his own mind. We know that already from the way in which he suspected that he was being led into a trap, that there was a plot. Also, of course, maybe it is difficult to classify a king as a trade or profession or an occupation because there can only be one king at a time, whereas in the case of these other trades and occupations and professions you have a number of people following them at the same time. But that is hardly possible in the place of the king.

Duncan: Surely he is ... he says that the sramana and brahmans are there actually for the people to give donations to.[14]

S: Yes.

Duncan: Isn't that some kind of, if not a trade, well it does give them a line of useful service?

S: But this whole passage, this whole question, reflects Ajatasattu's conception of religion, and maybe the average Indian conception of religion in those days, and maybe even today. That is to say religion is concerned with going to heaven; that you lead your ordinary life, you're a weaver or you're a basket maker or you're a soldier. You follow your ordinary occupation. You make money. With that money, yes you give donations for religious purposes to religious people, as a result of making those donations you earn merit, and as a result of that merit you go to heaven. This was Ajatasattu's and many other people's conception of religious life. So, anyway, in the long run it would seem almost that your ability, your capacity, to lead a religious life depended upon your capacity to make or earn money. But in the case of the samana there seems to be a completely different conception of religion. First of all he hasn't got a job and he is not earning money. He is not able to make any offerings and therefore not able to go to heaven. Is he leading a religious life? What is he doing? What is the fruit of his life? Do you see what I mean? I mean Ajatasattu is not asking the question purely from a worldly point of view. He is asking it from a sort of religious point of view. The two sort of go together. That the average man, the ordinary man, the worldly

man, has a job. He earns money, he supports himself and his family, that is a fruit of his labour, in this life, in this world. But in addition to that, out of his earnings he makes offerings to religious people, earns merit, and goes to heaven. So there's another fruit, a superior fruit. But both these fruits are dependent upon his job, his place in society, his earning money, his place in the economic system. The life of the samana seems to negate all that. He has got no family. He has got no job. He has got no income. So what sort of religious life does that make possible? He is not supporting anybody. He is not earning merit. And so is he not going to go to heaven? So why is he doing it? Why is he living in the way he does? What is the fruit of his life? In other words, the samana represents a completely different attitude, completely different approach. So is there any sort of parallel to that in our own day? This sort of conception of working and earning and paying your way and eventually getting to heaven? Is there any sort of parallel? Do people still think like that in the West? They certainly do in India.[15]

Paul: In some ways, being in a Right Livelihood Co-op. People say, 'Why do you work it low? You don't get a wage. You don't get a wage packet...'

S: Right.

Paul: ...where you can spend on like a car, new stereo, nights out on the town and people cannot quite do it! They can't understand why you ...

Ratnaketu: People are not satisfied to wait until the end of their life to go to heaven, they want to get to heaven now! They want to spend their money. They want to give it to the churches of the West End: the cinemas, and things like that, and get to heaven before they die.

David: It seems to be ... in this society it is very utilitarian because we haven't got the possibility of these religious teachers. People that have chosen to stand outside that, and that although they're outside it, they're recognized because of that. But we don't seem to have that. I think that's the fundamental difference.

S: Yes, that's true.

David: There's none we could go and... the working man now would know to go and speak to.

S: For instance, we do have clergyman, we do have bishops, but people don't take them seriously in that sort of way. And one of the reasons is that they're following that particular vocation in a way as a sort of trade. I mean many of them have it ... it is a sort of job. They've got an income. They've got a salary. Many of them have got wives and families. I mean not all of them, the Catholic priests don't have wives and families, not officially anyway. (laughter) But the Church of England clergyman and Methodist ministers and Baptist ministers and Presbyterian ministers, they've all got wives and families and they all have salaries and all that sort of thing. So ordinary people, in a manner of speaking, they pick up on this. They feel, I mean I have heard them say this, not people who were Buddhists, but people who were Christians, that they don't feel that there is any difference between those people and themselves. They've got the same problems about sending the kinds to school, buying the wife a new hat, and all the rest of it. (laughter) They are not any different from us. So what can we gain from them? This is why some people, quite a lot of people, even now...

[16] all the respects from other people. I mean, this is sometimes sort of acknowledged even by non-Catholics. But the mass of clergy in this country, well, they're just part of ordinary society. People don't feel that they can go to them or look up to them, you know, in any sort of way. So we've no figure sort of standing outside. There are no monks sort of living in the desert or up in the mountains that you can just go and visit or anything like that.

In a very few countries you do have. In Greece there are, you know, just a few hermits here and there, you know - Greek Orthodox hermits, but they're... I don't think there's more than ten or twelve left. You used to have them in Russia in the old days. There was this important institution of the staretz - if you've heard of the staretz, which was the spiritual guide, very much like the ... a sort of guru-figure; sometimes living in monasteries, sometimes living in hermitages in the forest - and people would go to them. And they were usually outside the ecclesiastical system. They were monks, and they just lived by themselves, or just in small communities, and meditated and prayed, and so on. But, you know, people did feel they were something apart... like the samanas; but certainly in this country we don't have anything of that sort at all. More and more the religious person is becoming a high-powered operative - with TV stations and advertising and all the rest of it! Just like I can suspect it would describe in this little book, which Ratnaketu brought up: 'Evangelism Explosion'. A lot of it is an explosion of publicity and advertising - and again the chap is supporting a wife and family out of it all and running two or three Mercedes and houses in Florida (laughter) and all the rest of it. A private aeroplane! So where's the difference? You know, there need to be people standing outside who are...

One feels this very strongly in India. I mean, ordinary people, they feel the person who can give them the best advice, even about their worldly life and worldly affairs, are the people who are standing outside it all, who are not involved in it. The Indians generally have got this deep faith that the sadhu, the holy man... since he's standing outside the whole system, can see it more clearly, and can give you, who are in the system, better advice - even about your worldly affairs. And this is the way in which most people use sadhus in India - just for advice about their ordinary affairs. They don't need to go to the psychoanalyst or to the doctor or lawyer for advice or to talk things over with. They just go to the sadhu if they're worried about anything. And very often it works! A lot [17] of these sadhus, they do have a certain amount of insight, because they have given up worldly life. They do see it from the outside. They can see what's going wrong, very often, or at least the person has the opportunity of unburdening himself to someone who is listening sympathetically and who is not himself actually involved in that sort of situation, and that itself can help quite a lot. But again we don't in our society have anything like that. The nearest you can get is the agony columns of the newspaper (laughter) or the confessional, and of course that has certain drawbacks and disadvantages because you're not even free to confess what you want to confess. You know, you have to confess those things which are officially regarded as sins, which you may not feel are sins at all, and things you might feel quite badly about might not be regarded as sins. So that makes confession, under those circumstances, rather difficult. There was an account I was reading just the other day in a new book I got. It's called 'Women: Psychology's Puzzle' (laughter). It's written by a woman doctor, it contains lots of useful information, but there's one anecdote about a little girl who - Catholic of course - who used to go to church with her mother, and her mother noticed that, during the prayers, there was one particular prayer where you acknowledge that you are a sinner. So the mother noticed that the little girl wasn't repeating this bit. She just kept quiet. The little girl was about six. So the mother said to her afterwards 'Well, why don't you repeat that bit? Why don't you acknowledge that you are a

sinner?' So she said, 'I don't feel that I am a sinner! I've not committed any sins!' So the mother said, 'Oh, no, but you have! You are a sinner!' And so she spent several hours trying to convince the little girl that she was a sinner. So after that - and she had to repeat that particular portion of the prayer - after that the little girl repeated it, but quite unwillingly, and she still didn't really believe that she was a sinner.

Ratnaketu: Gosh!

S: Yes! This was an anecdote. So even at the age of six you have to be made - well, even at the age of five or even at the age of five months, if possible - you should be made conscious of the fact of sin and that you are a sinner and confess that sin. So I think that can be quite a heavy sort of conditioning.

Anyway, that is by the way. But we don't have, [18] broadly speaking, sort of generally acknowledged figures, standing something apart from the society - though still in contact with it, to whom we can look up, and to whom we can go in time of need. I mean sometimes it is said that the psychologists, especially the psychoanalysts, have taken over from the priests - but they're also a profession, so you can't have the same sort of confidence in them. They also stand to make something out of it - you know, to make something out of you - and it does seem a little suspicious that psychoanalysis makes quite a strong point of the fact that it actually helps the patient to pay the psychoanalyst! (laughter)

Ratnaketu: So what then is the difference between that, sort of like a profession, an ordinary profession, and ... what is the essential difference between that and somebody who is like a hermit, who is not in the world? What is the...

S: Well, you might put it in co-op terms. The hermit, you know, takes what he needs and gives what he can. He only takes what he needs. The samanas take what they need. They just ... they accept food, they accept clothing, and they give what they can, in the way of advice, instruction, help. But the professional person is out to make as much as he can for himself and his family. He doesn't see... well he doesn't simply take what he needs. He takes what he wants or he gets as much as he possibly can, you know, by exploiting his particular skills, and he sees no limit, so that you have doctors becoming millionaires, lawyers becoming millionaires. They don't need all that money, but they've got skills which are in great demand.

Ratnaketu: You see religions, churches, becoming multinational, big-money organizations...

S: Yes, yes! But I think this is inevitable when the person concerned has got a family to support. It's through the family, mainly, that you enter into this sort of economic structure, this economic network. I mean Samuel Johnson, Dr Samuel Johnson said, 'A married man will do anything for money!' (laughter) Well he has to! Yes? I mean Samuel Johnson was a married man himself, don't forget, for twenty years. So he knew! And he had very great difficulty making both ends meet. So what can you do? I mean your children are hungry. What can you do? You can't help yourself. You might, you know, be willing, if you were very strong-minded, to let [19] yourself starve, but you feel 'Well, how can I let my family starve? I've got to do anything to feed them, even if it means stealing.' So a married man will do anything for money. That's putting it pretty strongly, but in a way he was hitting the nail on the head. This is why Bacon says that, you know, that a married man, with wife and children, has given hostages to fortune. And fortune then has power over you. If it was just yourself

you don't have to bother. You think, all right, if it means giving up your life - never mind! But it's not so easy to sacrifice your family. You might feel you've no right to sacrifice them. So I think this is the essential difference between the hermit, or the samana, or the person working in a co-op, or working, you know, within the general FWBO structure: you take what you need and you give what you can. You give as much as you can. You're not thinking just in terms of getting, of taking, from society, you know, through the exploitation of your particular skill. Not taking to get as much as you can, you know, for yourself and your family and other worldly dependants. So when you see, you know, spiritual teachers and so on becoming incorporated into the social structure, and when you see religion itself, or the so-called religious profession, becoming a career just like any other, well, then you can be sure that corruption has really crept in, hmm? I mean, it isn't so very long ago that the church was a professional career - along with the army and the law. I mean, in a respectable upper-middle-class family, if you had three sons: all right, one went into the army, one went into the church, and one went into the law - in the same sort of spirit.

Ratnaketu: I am reminded of a story Nagabodhi told, that - at the LBC when he was doing a beginners' class there, when it first opened - that a lady came bringing her son, and they went and learned the meditation. Then she asked how long it would take for him to learn it well enough to be able to teach it and asking all sorts of question like this. Then, he, Nagabodhi, realized that they were looking for a career for him and they thought of the career of teaching meditation, because that's the sort of one of the popular things these days!

S: Yes, yes, right, and a lucrative thing to do. He'd be able to support himself and his family. I remember Vajrayogini telling me much the same sort of thing. When I went over to Holland Vajrayogini had organized a retreat and I was doing something on that retreat with Vajradaka and Mangala and some others, and many people on this retreat were people who wanted to be Gestalt therapists - you know, giving [20] therapy to other people. So Vajrayogini told me that Gestalt therapy was becoming very popular in Holland and a lot of people were going straight into Gestalt therapy teachers' courses. In other words, they didn't have any idea of learning Gestalt therapy first and applying it to themselves, and developing themselves. They wanted to become teachers of Gestalt therapy straight away, just for a... So I asked he why this was and she said, 'Well, it's just for the sake of a career.' You know, you can make a lot of money teaching Gestalt therapy, and giving therapy to other people. Though you yourself may be in quite a bad state.

So this is the sort of thing that happens. I mean it happened in the case of Buddhism in India even by the time of Asoka, because some of the Brahmins, we are told, saw that bhikkhus, the followers of the Buddha, were well looked after, well supported. People respected them. So they were being provided with fine viharas to live in and plenty of food. So Brahmins started becoming bhikkhus - joining the sangha and getting ordained so that they could participate in this support. Because, you know, their support as brahmins was beginning to fall off. So they climbed on to the Buddhist bandwagon, to get supported that way. I've had people coming to me in India wanting to become my disciple and... But that is what it meant! They meant that, you know, they joined you. You taught them the tricks of the trade and then they would support themselves! This is how they saw things. In other words, it's the ministerial career - you know, a career in the church. You saw a lot of this in Europe during the Middle Ages. Well, of course officially priests weren't married. But 90% of priests kept concubines and no one bothered very much about it - you know, from the pope downwards (pause)... and even if they didn't have concubines, they had nephews, you know, they supported their sisters'

families. They aggrandized them and made them princes, and gave them lands. You read of this sort of thing all the way through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period, right onwards down into the present century. And two nephews of Pope Pius XII - who wasn't many years ago - were made princes as a result of his influence. So why should a religious figure want to make his own nephews princes? What does this mean? He's just sort of aggrandizing his own family, hmm?

Anyway, perhaps we've laboured that point long enough. I was going to say something about this question of refined manners, cultivated manners, in a way, coexisting with the fact that you're the sort of person who disposed of his own father. (laughter) You see, cultivated manners are all very well, but they are no substitute for ethics. In Buddhism the two tend to go together. It has been pointed out that [21] the term 'sila' in Buddhism covers not only what we call ethics but also what we would regard as good manners or etiquette, hmm? Guenther makes this point; he quite correctly does that. Anyway, it's something if you've got the manners. Yes, the manners mustn't be neglected - but the ethics, of course, are much more important. But Buddhism does stress: have both if you possibly can! But, very often, people who have long since abandoned ethics retain their good manners. In a way this creates a quite odd situation. They're so polite, they're so refined and courteous, but they may be complete rogues. They may even be criminals.

I remember one instance of this - I have mentioned it before - told me by a Tibetan friend of mine. This friend belonged to the highest circles of the Tibetan aristocracy. I knew him in Kalimpong. He was my next door neighbour so we became very friendly. He was also quite a staunch Buddhist and he had been in Lhasa during some political disturbances, or intrigues, and he had been thrown into prison for about three weeks, and while he was in prison he'd been tortured not very badly but, well, badly enough. And one of the people from the opposite party, so to speak, had been there in the dungeon, sort of supervising the torture. Anyway he was released - actually nothing was proved against him - he was released and a few weeks later he found himself at a party - one of those big Lhasa gatherings, and he happened to meet the man who had been supervising his torturing (laughter). So he said, this man, said 'Aha! Hello! How are you? I haven't seen you for such a long time!' (laughter), as though nothing had happened, yes? So he told me this story and apparently it's quite characteristic of these Tibetan aristocrats. So here you can see the manners becoming completely divorced from the ethics. Yes? So that is in a way, quite dangerous because, you know, the good manners can cover up, sometimes, the lack of ethics.

Ratnaketu: Also, I read another dangerous thing, because I've just read a book called 'A Room with a View' by E.M. Forster and in it it's got these upper-middle-class people, and they've got excellent manners, but it's not them at all. Underneath all their emotions and that they're just living in the world of superficial manners and politeness and they don't even know how they're feeling, or...

S: Right. Yes. But they know how to behave!

Ratnaketu: They know how to behave.[22]

S: Very, very polite. Always say the right things, but actually they don't know what they themselves really feel sometimes. Anyway, that's a passing point. The great point here is, what is the objective criterion of success in the spiritual life? What are the fruits of the

recluse? What are the fruits of this, as it were, unconventional, this - in a sense - anti-traditional, in a sense unorthodox, way of life of the samana? There seems to be - the king is suggesting - no fruit, as there is in the case of the lives and careers of other people. So, in a way, he's calling upon the Buddha to sort of justify himself, at least to explain himself, why he's leading the life that he does, why he is following the way of life that he does. There must be some meaning, some purpose, but it's not clear to the Maharaja - he just can't see that. So he's asking the Buddha to explain. All right, let's carry on then. Like to read 15, someone?

David: 'Do you know, Maharaja, if you have put this question to other samanas or brahmins?'
'Venerable Sir, I am aware that I have done so.'
'If it is not wearisome to you, tell me what they replied.'
'Nothing is wearisome to me, Sir, whenever the Exalted One is seated, or others like him.'
'Speak, then, Maharaja.'

S: So you notice the polite exchange. (chuckles) 'Do you know, Maharaja, if you have put this question to other samanas or brahmins?'
'Venerable Sir, I am aware that I have done so.' (laughter)
'If it is not wearisome to you, tell me what they replied.'
'Nothing is wearisome to me Sir wherever the Exalted One is seated, or others like him.'
They're very, very polite, or even complimentary to each other, 'Speak, then Maharaja.' All right then, read that next paragraph.

David: 'The Maharaja said he had visited Purana Kassapa, an exponent of the theory that there is no after-effect or resultant of action or karma. According to this, a person committing an evil act, or causing someone else to do so, experiences no evil result. Similarly, no merit is acquired by the performance of a good act or by the causing of one to be performed. The Maharaja did not consider this an answer to his question, but, not wishing to offend samanas [23] and brahmins, said nothing and went away.'

S: This last point is in a way quite significant. The Maharaja wasn't satisfied with the answer, but, 'not wishing to offend samanas and brahmans, said nothing and went away.'

Anyway, what was the point, what was the teaching of Purana Kassapa? An exponent of the theory that there is no after-effect or resultant of action or karma. According to this, a person committing an evil act, or causing someone else to do so, experiences no evil result. Similarly, no merit is acquired by the performance of a good act or by the causing of one to be performed. So what sort of a point of view is this?

Ruciraketu: It's not nihilist?

David: It doesn't seem much of a teaching to me.

Paul: It doesn't seem to be a nihilist point of view because in some ways it sounds quite a waste of time as well. If you can't gain merit from good actions because it seems to be quite important that you haven't got any bad or evil actions, but you haven't that got any counter-action, like your good merit!

S: But perhaps one should try to see the background of this. Don't forget that the background

is, you know, the background of ancient India: Vedic ceremonies and so on. So it's as though Purana Kassapa is negating all that merit-making machinery of Vedic times. But at the same time it's as though, to change the metaphor - he's throwing away the baby with the bathwater, hmm? He's throwing away the whole principle of karma. He's refusing to recognize the very distinction between skilful and unskilful. So it's as though he's sort of occupying a half-way house - he's seen through the Vedic system, perhaps, but he's not understood the principle of karma in a deeper sense, so he's left with pure negation. I mean, perhaps he's understood that one doesn't gain merit by performing sacrifices and all that sort of thing. But for him the idea of merit and demerit is sort of inextricably bound up with performing or not performing these sort of sacrifices. He can't see, perhaps, that there is such a thing as merit - there is such a thing as demerit - there is such a thing as skilful action and unskilful [24] action; but these things are not bound up with the Vedic tradition or with the Vedic merit-making, sacrificial machinery. He can see through the ritualistic system, but he cannot appreciate the possibility of an ethical life independently of that. In other words, he's moved away from the Vedic system, but he hasn't come towards any position, you know, such as that of the Buddha.

Ratnaketu: It's like modern people. You know, some people these days deny that hell or heaven exists and that there's no such thing as sin, or earning your way to heaven, but they haven't got anything else to put in its place!

S: Yes. Yes. But they don't see that there is a distinction between, say, developing or growing and not growing. They've seen through the church, they've seen through what someone called the 'Roman racket' - that was a phrase coined by a Catholic priest whom I knew in Bombay, who was eventually unfrocked, (laughter) but he used to go on to me quite a lot about the 'Roman racket', but he was still a part of it, himself, at that time - but he used to let off steam with me and other non-Christian friends by denouncing the 'Roman racket'. So the people have seen through the 'Roman racket', or the 'Anglican racket', or whatever - they see the limitations of that system. They see that there is no real sort of ethical life there, or spiritual life there, but they've only seen through that - they've not seen through to anything positive - they've not found anything positive. So Purana Kassapa seems to be in that sort of position. You've got enough intelligence to see through the imperfections and weaknesses of the existing so-called religious system, but you haven't been able to, you know, see through to recreating or reformulating any real religious path or spiritual path of your own. So this was the distinction that was made between Purana Kassapa and the Buddha. The Buddha not only saw through the existing system, he was able to break through into something positive and creative for himself and for others.

David: It seems interesting that the Maharaja did not consider this an answer to his question, and so on. I mean, because in some ways it would seem to his advantage to believe in it - because he's just killed his father.

S: Yes, indeed! So it seems there was a sort of honesty in him, one might say. It would have been a very convenient doctrine for him to have adopted, but it didn't satisfy him because maybe he felt in his [25] heart, so to speak, he had done wrong.

Ratnaketu: ... don't think it affects the discussion.

S: He should not have killed his father, that it was an unskilful action, it was an evil action. So he wasn't convinced, when Purana Kassapa told him there was, in fact, no distinction

between good actions and evil actions. He wasn't convinced, because he felt, himself, that he had performed an evil action in killing his father. I mean he hadn't lost contact, so to speak, with his natural human sense of what was ethical and what was unethical.

Well, maybe Purana Kassapa had never killed anybody. He was probably leading a perfectly good life but, you know, intellectually his position probably wasn't very sound. In the case of the king, he wasn't leading a very good life, but he still had some sense left of what was really right and what wasn't really right. So rather an odd sort of contrast, hmm?

David: I think what you have just said is very important to our own time, because a lot of people - like Ratnaketu said - rejected the notions of heaven and hell, but we live in a sort of age where you can distance yourself from your actions enough to never really have to confront...

S: Yes. Right! Well, you know, one special case of that is modern warfare: you don't have to kill another human being, you know, with a knife or even with a gun. You just sit somewhere pressing a little button and you don't see anybody - you don't see anything happening to anybody. So it's much easier, presumably, to push that little button than it would be just to stick a knife into somebody or a bayonet into somebody. (pause)

Ratnaketu: And when you go into the supermarket and buy your packet of pig-meat...

S: Yes. Yes. Right!

Ratnaketu: ...it's got no connection whatever with any sort of living thing.

S: Or even sometimes when people steal - they just sort of take something from the supermarket shelf without paying for it - it's not like robbing another person...[26]

Ratnaketu: No. It's not.

S: ...It's some big impersonal organization - 'well, what difference does it make?' You're not even robbing Mr Sainsbury because it's just... he's not going to miss, you know, that 50p anyway, sort of thing. So in that way, one's moral sense becomes rather sort of fudged, blurred, compromised! But I think that is an important aspect of modern life because, you know, relations between people do become more indirect and more impersonal, and therefore more and more devoid of ethical quality. It's more easy to do something to another person when you do not even know them; you do not even know who you are doing it to. Maybe it would be quite impossible to do that same thing to another person if you were face to face with him and knowing him!

So one could perhaps formulate a sort of general principle here that the more impersonal relations are, the less likelihood there is that they will be ethical relations. Do you see what I mean? (long pause) Anyway, let's go on to the next paragraph.

Ruciraketu: 'The maharaja went also to Makkhali Gosala; he considered that there is no root or reason for the defilement or purity of beings. There is no action, effort, force, energy, or strength as of the individual, the end of suffering coming only with the completion of rounds of rebirth. Makkhali was of the opinion that these were comparable to the paying out of string

from a ball; when all the string was unwound the process must cease so one continued with one's rounds of rebirth. So one continued with one's rounds of rebirth until the allowance made by some fate or destiny was exhausted. The Maharaja, feeling again that his question had not been answered, went away.

S: So what does Makkhali Gosala really teach? 'He considered that there is no root or reason for the defilement or purity of beings.' He didn't deny that people were either defiled or pure. He denied only that there was no real reason for that. I mean he denied that they could accept responsibility for their own defilement or their own purity. 'There is no action, effort, force, energy, or strength, as of the individual, the end of suffering coming only with the completion of rounds of rebirth. Makkhali was of the opinion that these were comparable to the paying out of string from a ball; when all the string was unwound the process must cease. So one continued with one's rounds of rebirth until the allowance made by some fate or destiny was exhausted.' Hm?

Ratnaketu: Very, sort of, just chaos.[27]

S: It's not exactly chaos; it's more like a sort of deterministic evolutionism; that is to say, there is nothing you can do about your own fate or your own salvation; you are part of the general process. There is nothing that you can do to purify yourself, or to defile yourself; there is nothing that you can do to gain enlightenment, or to gain emancipation. You just have to allow yourself to be carried on by the natural process; that'll get you there in the end. There is nothing that you as an individual can do about it. This was his point of view. You've got to go through, I believe he mentioned 84,000 different kinds of rebirth, and then you would get, you know, to Nirvana, or whatever. You can't hasten the process. It is not an individual thing; it's a collective thing. So it's as though he submerged the individual completely in what we might call the evolution of the species. Do you see the distinction?

David: Does that imply, then, that there would be no learning from experience? Do you think, as one went through...?

S: It would seem to be, certainly so far as purity and defilement were concerned - purity and defilement meaning your own spiritual progress or otherwise - this was not dependent on your individual efforts; you had to wait for the cosmic process to carry you forward. In other words, it's as though he's saying there was a lower evolution but no higher evolution. Or rather he's including the higher evolution in the lower evolution and making it an essentially collective thing.

Paul: It's more like a genetic evolution.

S: Yes. You see sort of echoes or reflections of that in some modern, sort of pseudo-spiritual thinking about the Aquarian Age, the age of Aquarius: that, you know, the whole world, even the whole cosmos, is being sort of carried forward, collectively, towards a higher stage of evolution. You've just got to go along with it, go with the flow, so to speak. So you see what I mean? It's a bit reminiscent of this theory of Makkhali Gosala, and it negates, to a great extent, the importance of individual effort, whereas the Buddha stressed the importance of individual effort, that the individual can rise above the collective. But Makkhali Gosala seems to have seen salvation as an essentially collective thing, arrived at by everybody, as a result of what we would call natural evolution, in the course of time, and that there was nothing you

could do as an individual to speed up that process or retard it. It would carry on inevitably, and you would be, you know, part [28] of it. It's as though human beings have to go through a necessary course of evolution, and there is nothing you can do about it as an individual. So, in a way, you don't have to bother.

It's a bit like Marxist historical determinism. You know what I mean by that? That, you know, the victory of the proletariat is inevitable: that is the... an inevitable fourth stage in the establishment of Communism, which is, of course, salvation.

So you can see that there are some parallels here with modern thought, you know, both secular and religious. You will be saved whether you like it or not! But in the cosmos's own time; there is nothing that you can do in the meantime to speed up the process.

Ratnaketu: Actually, in that book it's a bit like that. One of the questions they ask you is, you know, 'If you were to die now and you were in front of God and he was to say, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you say?' Then you say, 'Well, they expect me to say I've done my best in my life - I've tried to keep the commandments.' And then their reply to that is that that is no reason for God to let you into Heaven. The only reason - the only way - to get let you into heaven is just to love God. All you have to do is accept God and love God, and that's it; or love Jesus.

S: You just have to please the big boss.

Ratnaketu: Yes, and it's a similar sort of thing. They're saying that you don't have to, really, do any ethical, you don't have to earn your way, you don't have to create yourself anew or anything like that. You just have to love Jesus, and accept that, and then that's all - you'll be saved!

S: Or others say that God has got a Plan, you know, with a capital P, and that'll be fulfilled or carried out regardless of what individual human beings do. But do you see the general trend? It's regarding, well, including the religious life itself, in this overall sort of scheme of cosmic determinism. So that deprives the individual of freedom, and therefore negates - yes - not the distinction so much between defilement and purity, but you consider that there is no root or reason for the defilement or purity of beings because there is nothing you can do about it. Your purity or defilement just depends upon where the collective evolutionary process at present is. You're carried along with that, or not carried along with that. So there is also a danger here that we wait for, you know, the trend to carry us along with it, rather than [29] making our own individual effort.

Duncan: Does this mean that it's an unconscious development that Makkhali postulates?

S: Well, he doesn't postulate a development of the individual, as such, at all. He seems to postulate what we would call a collective development, and which is inevitable, and which the universe and human beings (as part of the universe) have to go through automatically, in the course of a series of 84,000 lives.

Ratnaketu: Which is something that runs its course.

S: Something that runs its course, comparable, as he said, to the paying out of string from a

ball. Once you start unwinding, you've got to unwind the whole lot.

Ruciraketu: This really ceases to be true, though, at the stage where self-consciousness arises, doesn't it? (S: Yes.) You know, where people can start - a few - taking responsibility, because ...

S: But he does not accept that possibility.

Ruciraketu: So to that extent it would be an unconscious sort of development that he's talking about?

S: Well, I mean, unconscious development, collective development, is possible up to a certain point, but according to Buddhism, or at least according to the way that I explain it - individual development is possible from that point onwards. I mean, you, the individual, is the only person who can be the bearer of the higher evolutionary process; but Makkhali Gosala, using those same terms, seems to include the process of the higher evolution in the process of the lower because he makes it collective and non-individual, whereas actually, according to me, that is a contradiction in terms, as spiritual progress is essentially individual - it cannot be collective.

Ratnaketu: What about things in Buddhism which are similar to this. Like the yugas - the kali-yuga, and the Golden Age?

S: Ah, these aren't really Buddhistic. These have crept into later Buddhistic literature from Hindu sources.[30]

Ratnaketu: And they wouldn't really, you wouldn't really call them Buddhist?

S: You could say that there might be, you know, some development like that in the collective life of man, but they wouldn't affect the individual. I mean, you might be born during the satya-yuga but you still might be a wicked person. You might be born in the kali-yuga, but conditions for leading the spiritual life might be more difficult than that. It's possible, but not impossible! Yes? It is still possible for the individual, under any circumstances, to lead the sort of life, or at least develop the sort of mental attitude, that he wishes. Yes. No doubt some periods are worse than others - sometimes, you know, this set of conditions is more difficult that that - but, none the less, the individual still remains an individual, with his own capacity for independent action.

So Makkhali Gosala seems to have failed to distinguish between the individual and the group. He thinks that, you know, that evolution and development are essentially group phenomena, and are, therefore, gone through automatically. (pause)

So, 'The Maharaja, feeling again that his question had not been answered, went away.' I think we'd better stop here for a cup of coffee or something, because it's ten...

(end of tape one)[31]

S: ...In King Lear his daughter comes back to life and everybody lives happily ever after, instead of the daughter dying and Lear dying, you know, it just doesn't happen that way!

Ratnaketu: No ... (laughter)

S : The audience insists on a happy ending. Well, they couldn't face tragedy, well, not... not that they just couldn't face the suffering of tragedy, but that sort of whole way of looking at things was beyond them. I mean that you could win, that you could be the victor, even though you died. They couldn't grasp that, they didn't want to understand that. (pause) It is as though people who cannot accept tragedy really do believe that death is the end - and if you are not rewarded before death, you never will be rewarded, it's as though that's what they really believe. There's a conflict between what they profess and what they really believe. You find this in all sort of religions. I don't know if you saw it, I don't remember if you were an Order member then, but if you were, you saw a letter that I wrote and in one - to the series to Shabda. - In one of these I described going to the funeral of one of my uncles, who had been a pillar of some church or other for well over fifty years. I remember him as a boy when he was a Sunday school teacher, and he gave me a copy of the Bible and all that. Any way, to cut a long story short, we attended the funeral ceremony and there was a woman minister - of this sort of Pentecostal church which he'd joined some years earlier - gave a sort of discourse about him and described how he'd be in heaven and all that sort of thing, and you know we didn't recognize this uncle of ours, he had such a, such virtues he was described as having (laughter) no, no! Members of the family had never seen these virtues. (laughter) Well, anyway, he was described as the embodiment of all the virtues, he'd lived only for God! Well the impression he gave other people was that he was a rather mean old chap, you know, never gave anybody anything. Anyway, he must have been busy living for God, because that's what we were told. But anyway the talk ended with the lady minister saying, 'Well Jack's now in heaven and we'll all sort of be joining him there one day,' you know, etc, etc. Anyway, back to his house for a cup of tea and sandwiches an hour after the funeral. So the woman minister took her hat off, relaxed a bit and said, 'Ah well, poor old Jack, we shan't be seeing him again!' (laughter) So that was sort of what she really felt. What she had said that she [32] had felt was the official attitude, yes? Whereupon she took a another sandwich! (laughter)

So I think this is why most people find it impossible to accept this very austere sort of Greek view, the Greeks didn't even believe in being rewarded after death. They felt the fact that you had achieved a certain understanding, and a certain develop... that was enough. No reward was required, either on this earth or afterwards. That understanding or that development was its own reward, you know, nothing more was needed than that. That seems to have been their view - that's the sort of view that it's very hard for a lot of people to accept; there has to be some tangible reward because you've been good. All right? It must be made up, all your sufferings must be recompensed, but, you know, the Greeks didn't see it like that.

Ratnaketu: And that's what Ajatasattu wants to know. He wants to know what the reward is going to be in this life.

S: Yes, comparable to the reward obtained by these other trades and professions. In a way, of course, he's seeing being a samana as a sort of trade or profession. So the Buddha goes along with that, up to a point, as we shall see. All right.

'A visit to Ajita Kesa-kambala had produced no better results, for this master considered that alms, sacrifice, karmic effects, this world and the other, parents, beings of spontaneous birth, did not exist. There were no samanas or brahmans who had reached the highest point, or who taught their wisdom to others. To the contrary, man was made of the four great elements

which, on his death, returned to their native bulk, while his faculties went into space. As on the two previous occasions, the Maharaja left without making any remark.'

S: This seems to be materialism, pure and simple. What did he mean by saying that alms did not exist? Well surely alms did exist because people gave alms to other people. So what does he mean by saying that alms did not exist?

Paul: Could it be the merits?

S: It's the merits - there is no such thing as meritorious alms-giving. The alms as a source of merit do not exist, and the same with sacrifice. Yes, people go through certain motions, but they go through those motions under the impression or with the conviction that by so doing they'll attain a certain result. [33] So he did not accept that; he did not accept that there was any result - he did not accept karmic effects. 'This world and the other.' He did not accept that there was any distinction between this world and another world, a world after death, a higher world, a happy world into which you could be born as a result of your alms-giving and sacrifices and karmic effects and so on. And parents? He didn't believe that parents existed. What does that mean? He did not believe that parents were parents. He didn't believe that there were any ethical duties towards parents, or ethical duties towards children; he didn't believe that it was any sin to cohabit say with one's own mother. He did not believe in the validity of those sort of ethical distinctions. So a parent was not a parent, one's mother is not one's mother, one's sister is not one's sister; one does not recognize the usual ethical restraints.

So 'beings of spontaneous birth, did not exist.' Beings of spontaneous birth are those who arise in higher worlds, without going through a womb as a result of meritorious deeds, especially meditation. He didn't believe in them either. And 'there were no samanas or brahmans who had reached the highest point or who taught their wisdom to others'. He didn't believe that there was a higher point. 'To the contrary man was made of the four great elements which on his death, returned to their native bulk, while his faculties went into space. As on the two previous occasions, the Maharaja left without making any remark.' So this seems to be an out and out negation of all, at least conventional, ethical and spiritual life, in accordance with a purely materialistic outlook. It is a bit like Communism, a bit like Marxism, except that they have their own sort of class based ethics.

Ratnaketu: What are his faculties in this case?

S: Faculties like presumably knowing and seeing, consciousness. But as of the two previous others the sort of drift of this whole teaching is to make any ethical or spiritual life impossible. It's as though these teachers have emancipated themselves from the older, cruder conceptions of religious life, but they haven't come to any conception of an individual spiritual life, consisting in individual growth and development as a result of one's own efforts; they haven't come to this.

Ratnaketu: Or any goal to aim for.[34]

S: They're a bit like the Sophists in Ancient Greece. The Sophists saw through conventional Greek religion, but they hadn't arrived at any profounder view of life to take its place, as for instance Socrates did or Plato did. Do you see the analogy? They could ridicule the old Greek mythology, and they were very clever, and they could teach young men how to give fine

speeches, but they couldn't give any further guidance than that, they hadn't won through to any more comprehensive or more satisfying vision of life, you know; that was the work of Socrates and Plato and to a lesser extent Aristotle.

So you have got a sort of analogy between the old Vedic conventions and these teachers and the Buddha on the one hand and ethnic Greek religion, ethnic Greek religious practice, and the Sophists and Socrates and Plato on the other. Do you see this? Well you find this in modern times even: there are lots of people who have seen through the churches, seen through the political parties, and so on, but they are in an intermediate stage, they haven't won through to any positive creative vision in the way say that Blake did. You see Blake saw through, I might say, Bacon, Newton, and Locke, but he not only saw through them, he won through to a creative vision of his own, which went far beyond just negating the teachings of those particular people.

So it is easy enough to negate, it's easy enough to be critical and cynical, but to go beyond that and achieve some more comprehensive outlook or some more creative vision is much more difficult. You find this sometimes with the secularists and humanists. I get the secularist monthly, 'The Free Thinker', but again one is often so conscious of its limitations. You agree with everything they say about the pope, about Mrs Thatcher, and so on and so forth, but it's all negative, it's all critical. There is hardly anything which is really positive and creative and inspiring. They've not won through to any larger vision; and it's so cramping, so confining sometimes, even though you agree with everything they say, but you want more than just negations. Negations are not very inspiring.

David: They're almost like the preliminary to inspiration aren't they?

S: Yes. They're just the preliminary clearing of the ground.

Ratnaketu: It is like the Four Sights of the Buddha.

S: Yes.

Ratnaketu: Yes, if he hadn't seen the last one of the person meditating he would have just ended up in a right state. You know he would have just had a really sort of black view of the world.

S: But that is exactly what people don't see or have no opportunity [35] of seeing in the modern West. You know, it's some figure, like the figure of the monk that the Buddha saw, that stands for something higher. Ah, it's no use sort of parading bhikkhus in yellow robes through the streets, because it doesn't have that sort of significance for them - it's just something comic, you know, a bit exotic, from the East. It's no use, you know, people blowing Tibetan trumpets and things like that - that doesn't help either. People have lost the language, as it were. Or it's no use people dressing up in white robes and parading on Parliament Hill, or Stonehenge, at the time of the summer and winter solstice - that doesn't help either; that's just something quaint and belonging to the past and a bit - what shall I say - folk-custom like; it's really no more than that. It doesn't suggest anything higher or beyond, because all those people dressed up in those white sheets - well, they're businessmen and shopkeepers the rest of the year (laughter). They just don that white sheet for the occasion and they don't really know anything about Druidism. It's all sort of made up anyway: nobody

really knows what the Druids taught, or what they did; and they weren't even connected with Stonehenge - I mean, we do know that! (laughter) The Druids came very, very much later than Stonehenge: there's no connection between them at all. That was an eighteenth century fallacy that Stonehenge was some sort of Druids' temple - that the Druids carried out bloody sacrifices there. Well, that's known now to be completely untrue.

So we don't have these sorts of living symbols, generally accepted of higher spiritual values. If we see them anywhere, perhaps it's in the arts. You at least have some sort of glimpse of them there. That's why the arts are so important for a lot of people. Or, you know, you get some sort of glimpse through great works of literature; but even that isn't the same as having a person, a generally recognized and accepted person, whom you can go to because you feel he stands outside it all.

Paul: I think that's why it's got such a destructive tendency in the West. People just see the negative point of view, of an argument and, especially nowadays, the positive point of view is sometimes positively discouraged.

S: Yes, yes. If you try to be a bit positive, you're naive or sentimental, or something like that, and that's why cynicism is so popular, why there is such a lot of it around - a sort of debunking attitude. Anyway, it's probably not even good to dwell [36] on it, to disagree with it. Let's go on to that fourth visit.

Ratnaketu: 'The fourth visit was made to Pakuda-Kaccavana. He held that there existed only the four great elements, ease, suffering, and life. These were never created or caused and were entirely unproductive. He made no attempt to answer the Maharaja's question.'

S: It's not easy to understand this point of view, but it's as though he analysed things into seven elements. There was always a trend of thought in India which tried to break things down into their constituent parts, their constituent elements. Within Buddhism itself, this trend found expression in the Abhidharma. So here one finds a quite simple and primitive and uncomplicated form of the same thing. This particular teacher tries to break down the whole of existence into seven great elements, as it were. First there are the four great elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Then there is ease - or pleasure, as we would say: sukha. Then there is suffering; and there's life. So you've got these seven things sort of... they were never created or caused - they're eternal, and they don't actually produce anything, - earth, water, fire, and air, happiness and suffering and life, sort of coming together in varying combinations, then parting, then coming together again; but nothing new is actually ever created; and this whole process just goes on and on. This, or something like this, seems to be his view.

Again there's no room for individual responsibility; there's no room for individual development. I mean all these views, as I mentioned before, seem to have this in common: that they make impossible any individual spiritual development. This is of course why, basically, the Buddha disagreed with them all, and rejected them all. All right, let's go on to the next one, the fifth one.

Daren: 'Next, the Maharaja said, he had visited the Nigantha of the Nata clan who expounded the doctrine of the fourfold restraint. The central theme of this related to the use of water, the term taken in its literal and in a figurative sense. The Nigantha considered himself to be free of bonds when he has subjugated himself entirely to his aims.'

S: The Nigantha of the Nata clan corresponds to Mahavira, the founder of Jainism; it's another name for him. He was an older contemporary of the Buddha. This account isn't very clear, but one point does emerge: that he expounded the doctrine of the fourfold [37] restraint. I'm not sure what that refers to. There is, of course, a threefold restraint of body, speech, and mind, but this could be restraint in the use of various things, because he then says, 'The central theme of this related to the use of water.' So why should the use of water, whether in the literal or figurative sense, be considered important - to take the literal sense at least? Why was the use of water important, or why did they think about this, in terms of restraint? (pause) Well, one of the leading doctrines of the Jains was, of course, non-violence. So water might contain little creatures, so you had to be careful in the use of water, so that you didn't inadvertently destroy any small creatures.

So 'The Nigantha considered himself to be free of bonds when he has subjugated himself entirely to attaining his aims.' (Pause) The Jains were a quite interesting sort of sect or interesting tradition, but they did believe that salvation could be attained by austerities even by self-mortification, by very strict restraint, by very strict self-control. giving up things... But they tended to think of restraint in very external terms - they didn't consider mental attitude in the same way that the Buddha did. But the Buddha regarded the Jains as less wrong than any of the other five teachers because at least they did acknowledge individual effort and individual action - at least that, however mistaken they were in other respects. The Jains seem to have been a bit sort of half way between the ancient Indian conceptions and the conceptions of the Buddha himself. They were very sort of literal, even materialistic, in their way of thinking: they believed that karma was a sort of subtle force or energy that clung around the soul, and this had to be burned or purged away by means of austerities and self-mortifications and then the soul would be left pure and isolated. And they believed very strongly in external austerities - they still do. There are still Jains left in India. I mean, there are no followers of other teachers - not in a continuous tradition, at least - but there are followers of Mahavira, there are followers of Nigantha of the Nata clan, still living in India - there's a few hundred thousand of them (pause).

Ratnaketu: What does it mean, he...?

S: So the Buddha regarded the Jains, or Mahavira, as mistaken, but not ignoble, not 'kino', not 'low', even though they were mistaken there was a certain nobility in their outlook because they did believe in self-control, individual effort, and so on. (?) The Buddha tended to put [38] them slightly apart from these other teachers, because the teaching of the Jain did not completely negate the possibility of spiritual life and development, even though they had quite mistaken ideas about it. But the other five teachers didn't even accept the possibility of any spiritual life at all.

'The Nigantha considered himself to be free of bonds when ... ' and so and so. Nigantha means one who is free from bonds, free from karma. All right, come on to the last teacher.

David: 'Finally, the Maharaja visited Sanjaya Belatthi. This master could give no pronouncement on the existence of any other world, on the spontaneous origin or beings, as to whether there were karmic effects, or as to what happened after death to a person who had attained to the Truth. As in all the other cases the Maharaja left without remark.'

S: He wouldn't commit himself to any position at all, hmm? (amused chuckles)

Ruciraketu: Clever man!

S: He wouldn't agree or disagree with anything. What would you say this position represented? (pause)

Ratnaketu: It's all one, sort of thing.

S: Well, no, because he wouldn't even commit himself to that view! Well, how does this view differ from, say, the Madhyamika view? There must be some difference, surely?

Daren: He's not really facing up to things.

S: In what way?

Daren: He hasn't come out with any sort of positive statement. He just doesn't really want to think about things at all. He's kind of ah...

S: So what is the difference, then, between his view and that, say, of Nagarjuna - the view of the Madhyamikas? That there are really no Four Noble Truths? You can't really think in terms of conditioned co-production? etc., etc. What's the difference between Sanjaya's [39] view and this view?

Ratnaketu: That there's no underlying principle in the universe.

S: Yes.

Ratnaketu: There's no conditionality, there's no principles.

S: Yes because Nagarjuna and the Madhyamikas, like all other Buddhists, believe that - even though words are completely inadequate, even though thoughts are completely inadequate, in a manner of speaking underneath them all, behind them all - there is some sort of ineffable spiritual principle that you can't describe. So they have through their spiritual practice - maybe through their meditation - some contact with that, some experience of that, and it's after that contact, after that experience, that they see the limitations of words and even of thoughts. But that isn't the case with Sanjaya - he refuses to make even provisional use of words or of ideas. In the case of Nagarjuna and the Madhyamikas they at least agreed to make provisional use of words. They used words to negate words - they used ideas to negate ideas - so that you can get into contact with actual experience, with reality itself. But Sanjaya doesn't seem to have any conception of a reality behind these things, so to speak. Do you see what I mean? He won't commit himself to any position; he won't take a stand on the position which may be only relatively true, for the sake of arriving at some higher, ultimate truth. The Buddhist view generally is included in the Madhyamika: that you realize the ultimate truth only by taking your stand, initially, on the relative truth. But Sanjaya refuses to take his stand even on the relative truth, therefore he never arrives at the ultimate truth. For instance you say, 'All right, make an effort? An individual? Why? Because there's no such thing as an individual, how can I make an effort?' You can go on like that.

But on the other hand you can say, 'Well, yes, 'individual' is only a relative term. The individual himself is not absolutely existent. Nevertheless I feel that I'm an individual

therefore I have to act as an individual, develop and grow as an individual, and then I will see through for myself the limitations of human duality.' But that is not Sanjaya's view. Incidentally Sariputta and Moggallana were originally disciples of this same Sanjaya. Do you remember from the 'Life of Sariputta'?

Anyway perhaps we've spent enough time with these six teachers. In any case, the Maharaja, Ajatasattu, was dissatisfied with them all. None [40] of them succeeded in giving him the satisfaction of mind that he was searching for. Right, carry on then. So, 'He concluded the accounts of these visits with the following.' So someone read 34.

Ruciraketu: 'And now, Sir, I ask the Exalted One: Is it possible to declare of the life of a recluse, fruits occurring in the same way as of craftsmen, evident amongst the things as seen in the present existence, and belonging to this life.'

'Is it possible, Maharaja, and on that account, I will put to you a question in return. Answer at your leisure.'

S: So all the previous teachers have not been able to give the Maharaja a reply. In the case of five of them, at least, the reason's obvious because, well, they didn't believe in the possibility of a fruit at all - they couldn't say what fruit was achieved because they didn't believe that there was a fruit, in as much as they negated the whole possibility of an ethical and spiritual life. And why Nataputta wasn't able to answer the question, we are not told, but no doubt he had his limitations too.

But the Buddha says that, 'it is possible to declare of the life of a recluse, fruits occurring in the same way as for craftsmen, evident amongst the things as seen in the present existence, and belonging to this life. It is possible, Maharaja, and on that account I will put to you a question in return. Answer at your leisure...' Don't be in a hurry to reply, answer at your leisure. So, then, what does the Buddha say? 35?

Duncan: 'What is your opinion in this case, Maharaja. Suppose you have a servant, a slave, who rises before you do and goes to bed later than you do, who does willingly what is wanted, behaves well, speaks pleasantly, even watches your face to anticipate your wishes. He thinks, 'surely the passing-on of merit from one existence to another is wonderful, the resultant of merit marvellous! Here is the Maharaja of Magadha, son of the Vedeha princess; he is a man, and I too am a man. He is endowed with the five leads of sensual pleasure, and the means of gratifying them like a deva, I imagine. I am his servant, rising earlier and retiring later than he does, doing willingly what is wanted, behaving well, speaking pleasantly, even watching his face to anticipate his wish. May I be as he is and acquire merit! Surely I should shave my [41] head and beard, put on the yellow robe, leave my home and go out into the homeless life.' Suppose, in time, he does these things, lives as a wanderer, his senses, speech, and mind under control, satisfied with a minimum of food and clothing, and delighting in solitude. Suppose your people should tell you of all this; would you say, 'let the man come back and be my servant as before'?

S: Read the next paragraph too: it all leads on.

Duncan: 'No sir. Rather we should greet him with honour, rise from our place and invite him to be seated. We should arrange for robes and a bowl, a sleeping place and medical supplies,

and give orders for proper protection for him'

'This, Maharaja, is my first fruit of the life of a recluse, evident amongst things as seen in the present existence, and belonging to this life.'

S: So what do you think the Buddha is getting at, or why has he replied in this way? Do you think the Buddha is wholly serious?

David: I think he's being slightly facetious.. (laughter)

S: ..Not to say ironical: because the Maharaja has asked for some fruit visible in this world (laughter). Oh yes. If you become a recluse and a samana it will be very visible: people will respect you, they'll support you. I mean, even you would support a samana, your own samana who had been your own slave, you would support him, you would respect him? Yes, so how can you say that? How could you question whether there is a fruit or not? You know it yourself, already, at least to this extent. So, also, there is a certain sort of, technique - not to say, diplomacy - in the Buddha. He's starting off with something very basic and simple. He's establishing a certain area of agreement. Do you see what I mean? He's getting an affirmative response from the Maharaja that, yes there is such a thing as a fruit of the recluse, of the life of the recluse.

But what does the Maharaja's reply tell us, not only about the Maharaja but about social life in India at that time?

Ratnaketu: People respected ...[42]

S: People respected the samanas, those who'd gone forth. It's not altogether clear why they should have done so, but that respect seems to have been very widespread: it enabled vast bands of these people to, you know, to just wander from place to place, and be supported. I mean, if you told people nowadays you'd like to be a samana and, you know, just wander from place to place and be supported and provided with robes and bowl, a sleeping place and medical supplies and proper protection, well what would be their response?

Ratnaketu: Antagonism.

S: Antagonism.

Ratnaketu: Strange. There's a complete turnabout.

S: Even now this is true to some extent, despite the government's attempts in India - or least some state government's attempts - to discourage people from supporting wandering sadhus. They regard them as just beggars, and, you know, not helping the economy of the country. Well, its very deeply rooted in Indians still, this respect for the man who's given up worldly life, given up home, given up family, even though people might not want to do it themselves, or not even consider doing it themselves, they have very great respect for the man who actually has done this. They believe that really this is the right thing to do; they deeply acknowledge that. So they respect somebody else for doing it, even though they are not able to do it themselves. They really do believe that truth is to be found in this way - not by staying at home. This is a very deeply-rooted conviction of the majority of Indians, the majority of

Hindus.

Ratnaketu: Maybe it's because in India, in their culture, they're sort of religion orientated and finding out the truth, or things like that, and that somebody is courageous enough to reject the family and security, in order to find that, they'd respect him, but...

S: They don't bother so much, what you believe or what you teach: the fact that you've given up is itself enough. They accept the general implications.[43]

Ratnaketu: But over here we're sort of economy-orientated; and so if somebody gives up the family and their job, it means that they're not pulling their weight, they're not helping out the country, and all that.

S: Yes, that's why a lot of people feel quite ashamed to be out of work. They feel as though they're degraded, even though it's not their own fault that they don't have a job. Maybe they don't have a job just because of the general economic situation - but a lot of people, of the older school anyway, they feel quite bad about this.

Paul: Yes, I've been feeling that - I've been signing on for about a year, and it does - I think I've always been quite, actually, guilty, and I'm beginning to realize it was, like for your education at school, it's - because - somehow subtly stamped into you that you should support yourself, and it's not up to anyone else to support you, it's on your own bat.

S: Well, the Indians do believe this up to a point. They certainly believe it's good to work, they certainly believe it's good to earn and support other people, but they also believe that even better is to give up all that, even better.

Paul: That's the positive side. They haven't got that kind of positive side in this country.

S: But even if people were to sort of give up or drop out, it's, well usually, it's with the idea of not pulling their weight. I mean, very few would, you know, drop out, with the idea of devoting themselves to some sort of spiritual quest. I mean, that's not any longer part of our culture, and therefore people find it very difficult to understand that sort of dropping-out. Well, even within the Friends we know that people who give up their jobs - I mean, people who've been working out in the world, maybe in quite good, lucrative jobs - give up, for the sake of, you know, working in the co-op, or something like that, I mean very often their friends outside the FWBO just can't understand them, they think they're crazy... (pause)[44]

But that wasn't the view in ancient India - and isn't the view even now. But, as I said, nowadays in India people respect those who have given up in that way. They don't bother much about what you actually believe - whether you believe in God or don't believe in God - the fact that you've given up the worldly life, the fact that you've given up your home, given up your family, demonstrates you've got some faith that there's something beyond all that - whatever it may be, you can call it what you like - but there's some higher spiritual dimension, some transcendental dimension, which is sufficiently real to you for you to want to give up everything else for the sake of pursuing that. In a way, you don't need to describe it. People may not feel that they could understand your description anyway. I mean, you're in contact with that, that's enough, and the proof, you know, is that you've given up everything else, and they respect you deeply for that, and they believe you are in sort of contact with that

something that they can't understand, or that they don't see. And they might, even ordinary people, look at it in quite simple ways. They believe maybe you've got some sort of magic powers or something of that sort, they see it in those sorts of terms. But you're different, you're leading a different life, you don't have the same values as other people but they respect you for that (pause). And, you know, they believe that unless there were some such people living in the world and out of the world, so to speak, the world couldn't carry on. So that's a different attitude.

Paul: I think that in this country you get people who can't understand how you do it, but somehow, they still have got, they're inquisitive, they have got some kind of deeper response to what you're doing. It might not be very rational.

S: It was very interesting the response of the local people in Bethnal Green, when we were building Sukhavati. Were any of you around in those very early days? You weren't? When it was just a building site. When you had these thirty or forty, at one time, men, just working there. And there was a lot of sympathy from people in the surrounding area. And it was quite interesting that shop-keepers used to sometimes give the workers things - you know, send food across, or send some bread, or whatever. This used to happen quite often. There were all these young men just staying, and just working, and they're clearly not working for the sake of money. They're working for something, well, they're making some sort of Buddhist Centre, whatever it is, people couldn't understand what they were doing but really appreciated [45] that they were doing something which wasn't just for themselves. Do you see what I mean? And also I think upon reflecting, that one of the things that influenced people in their attitude was they were young men all on their own, without any family. No one to look after them so to speak, so sometimes the shop-keepers felt sorry for them and thought, you know, 'We must help them a bit, or send them something!' And I think the attitude has changed a bit now. I mean it's still quite sympathetic, but it isn't like it used to be. I think one of the reasons is that now there are so many women around, so it looks like a family.

(end of tape two - side one) side two:

S: ... It's more like people's own situation, therefore they don't feel so inclined to help. This is how I read the situation.

Ratnaketu: There's still a bit of - with the - Betty's, the shop across the road. Every time we pay the bill at Sukhavati, or we do some work for her, she will give us a packet of biscuits, she's just dana!

S: Yes. Well, especially in the case of the tramp - because the gypsy does go around with a movable home and, you know, with wives, children, horses, dogs, you know, goods and chattels - but the tramp has only got a bundle on a stick, or traditionally - I don't know, maybe tramps nowadays drive around in good cars ...(laughter) - but you know, the traditional image of the tramp is of the man with just a stick and a bundle tied to the end of it. So he quite clearly and tangibly has renounced the values of this world, the goods of this world. And there is a sort of feeling amongst quite a lot of people that, well, there's something in that, it means something, there's a sort of respect. I mentioned a little while ago about the Catholic priest. If people generally, in England, have got any respect for any sort of priest, it's the Catholic priest, because he's different, he's given up wife and home comforts and things of that sort. Maybe he does swig a bit of whisky on the quiet but, you know, all right, that's just

sort of acceptable. But the main thing that ordinary people care about - that is, ordinary job, wife and family, children - he's given all that up. So he is, in a way, a different kind of person; he is leading a noticeably different kind [46] of life, in a very easily recognizable way. So even non-Catholics sometimes say, well, they feel more respect for the Catholic priest than they do for the married, family-type ministers of their own church - sometimes people do acknowledge that.

Because it's as though, well, what's your means of support. Supposing someone sort of saw you walking along, in mid-air ... well, what would be their feeling - well, you know, he must have some other means of support - something we can't see. I mean, it may be sort of magical, or supernatural, but there's some other means of support, there's something that's holding him up. So in the same way, they see you living without - regular jobs, home wife, family - well, they feel ... and you're happy, yes! Happier than they are! So they cannot but think, 'Well, there must be something which is sustaining you, something that is holding you up; something that they haven't got; something that they can't see, and so they respect you for that. You know they respect you partly because of the mystery. They feel in a way you're a bit beyond them; they can't see what makes you tick, they can't see what sustains you. So they feel, in a way, quite obscurely perhaps, and vaguely and dimly, that you are some sort of higher being, in a way, so there's a sort of natural respect.

Ratnaketu: I must have just remembered that when I first got into the FWBO, and communities, I say that my father thought I was a bit of a failure, you know, because I didn't become what he wanted me to become - but not so long ago he wrote me letter saying that he actually respected me because I'd the courage to do something, do what I wanted to do, rather than just what most people just talk about doing - and so somebody who has actually given up things, they're doing something rather than just talking about doing it. People respect courage, it's a sort of quite basic thing.

S: Well, you know, there's not much courage in becoming a solicitor or becoming a bank clerk, but you know, there is courage required in, well, not having a job at all (laughter), and cutting yourself off from sources of support and security. You can't help feeling, well, that person's got a certain amount of courage, so you can't help respecting him for that, even though you wouldn't like to do that sort of thing yourself. There's a sort of sneaking respect, or even admiration, for what that person is doing. I think that is quite important: that in the Friends also, you know, people should see you as something a bit different. I mean no doubt you can be spiritually committed, you know, even if you've got a regular job, even if you're [47] married, you've got children - yes, you can be spiritually committed, but it's not easy for other people to see that, under those sort of conditions. But if, you know, you're sort of free from all those things, and people can see that - well, then they're going to take you much more seriously.

So I think it is quite important that in the Friends, and especially in the Order, there should be, you know, a considerable number of people, to say the least, who are quite clearly and obviously, you know, not involved in the usual way of doing things, not living the ordinary, conventional kind of life - or even appearing to. I think in modern times we don't need Vimalakirtis so much, we need more Milarepas. Do you see what I mean by that? Yes? I mean you may have someone holding down a really good job, you know, living in a beautiful house, with lots of children. I nearly said lots of wives, but that's not possible in England, but anyway, lots of children, car, and all the rest of it. It may be that deep down he's a great

Bodhisattva, but who's going to see that - they'll only see the job and the wife, and the children and all the rest of it. So you need people more like Milarepa, who are subsisting on next to nothing, and who don't have an ordinary job, don't have a wife, don't have children, that aren't thinking in terms of accumulating money, or aren't thinking in terms of going on expensive holidays - who are, you know, living and working, to all appearances, just for nothing. And that is going to be much more likely to impress people and make them think, and attract them. We need that sort of Bodhisattva. I'm not saying that Vimalakirti isn't a Bodhisattva - yes? - but I think that sort of Bodhisattva is not so useful nowadays. I think the Milarepa-type Bodhisattva is more useful nowadays, and he'll pull people up with more of a jerk, make them think more, question their own values, question their own way of life. You know, this especially applies when some of you go back to New Zealand. You want to set up something that'll really stop the New Zealanders in their tracks and make them think. You see what I mean? (laughter) (pause)

Anyway, that was a bit of a digression, but maybe quite an important one. So that's the first fruit of the life of a recluse. Certainly in that sort of society, at that time, and even nowadays, in India... that people respect you for what you've become, and they support you. There's a sort of deep down, underlaying recognition that what you're doing is in some way meaningful, even if people can't fully understand [48] it. That there's something noble in it, which people respect again, even though they can't fully understand it.

Ruciraketu: In a way, it's the more positive side of the ... miccha-ditthi, which we were talking about last week, ah, of anything which is religious is sacrosanct, and so on...

S: Right. That's true! But here it's definitely associated with giving up the home, with going forth from ordinary social life. People respect - because yes, at least that requires great determination, real courage, heroism, to cut yourself off from everything that most people think constitutes the whole of life. I mean the average man knows he'd be miserable away, for any length of time, from his job and his family and his kids and his TV, and his club, and his football. So he thinks, 'If somebody can give up all this, well, he must be at least very strong-minded.'

Paul: Yes. The funniest thing I ever heard was a friend where I used to work: he used to say he couldn't stay in the countryside, because what is there? There's no clubs, no pubs, cinemas ...

S: Discos..

Paul: He said how can he enjoy the countryside?

S: Yes. So the idea of such people is to develop the countryside. It's called development.

Ratnaketu: It's awful.

S: That's why they go round the world, looking for beautiful beaches, and all that sort of place, where they can build casinos and discotheques, and all the rest of it, so that people can enjoy themselves! (laughter). Yes! You watch out in New Zealand, otherwise they'll be doing that: these big American companies have got their eye on little, little old New Zealand. Yes! They're going to develop it, if you're not careful, for rich American tourists and

holidaymakers. They'd be a little annexe of the United States, if you're not careful (pause).

Anyway, maybe you'll be able to stop them in their tracks.

Ratnaketu: We'll try.[49]

Paul: Send FBS in!

S: All right, go on to the next paragraph then.

Ratnaketu: 'The Maharaja asked for another example. The Buddha quoted the case of a farmer who, cultivating his land, paid taxes, which increased the royal revenue. As in the case of the servant, the farmer compared himself to the raja, and at length gave up his possessions to lead the homeless life.'

S: This doesn't really add anything to the point that was previously made. This could be a sort of interpolation or addition just to swell it out, or make it clearer. We don't learn anything new from this, it's really a repetition of the same point. So let's go straight on.

Ratnaketu: 'The Maharaja asked for a fruit yet higher and sweeter than these. The Buddha replied, oh (Padmaloka gong sounds loudly for lunch: laughter)

S: Well, we've got on reasonably well. We've done five pages.

(End of day one. Day 2 18/7/82 continues immediately, on the same side of the tape, after voice prints)

S: All right, then. Top of page 65, paragraph 40 (pause). Someone like to read that?

David: 'Suppose, Maharaja, a Tathagata arises in the world, an Arahant, fully enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, wise as to the worlds, an incomparable guide to man's self-mastery, happy, a teacher of devas and men, a Buddha, an Exalted One. Having thoroughly understood and realized in His own experience this world, the world of devas, of Mara, of Brahma, samanas and brahmans, mankind of all classes, He declares His knowledge. He preaches the Truth, lovely in its origin, lovely in its development, and lovely in its consummation. He makes known the religious life, its meaning and attributes, in its entirety and perfection.'

S: So here the Buddha's discourse proper begins.[50] And you notice it does contain quite a number of sort of stock phrases, stock descriptions, that have been worked in. The Buddha himself may have used them, but they may also have been added by later compilers. So the Buddha says, 'Suppose, Maharaja, a Tathagata arises' 'Tathagata' you understand? Tathagata means a Buddha. It seems as though the Buddha very often, according to the Pali Scriptures, refers to himself in the third person: he didn't usually say 'I'. Sometimes he did, but more often than not he referred to himself in the third person, and as the Tathagata; he didn't refer to himself as the Buddha, but as the Tathagata, and there's quite a bit of discussion as to what this term actually means. But it means, the literal meaning is, either 'one who has thus-come', or 'thus-gone'; it depends how you divide the word, and how you interpret it grammatically. So it's one who has come, or gone, to a certain state. That state is not described - it's one who

has come or gone, just like that. So sometimes it's translated as the 'thus-come one', sometimes it's the 'thus-gone one'. There are various later metaphysical interpretations, such as that it means both come - and gone - thus. 'Gone to Enlightenment through Wisdom, come back into the world through Compassion' - that's the Mahayana interpretation. Quite a good one!

And there's the stock description. 'An Arahat, fully enlightened...' etc, etc; that is to say, in the words we use in the Buddha-vandana. So, 'Having thoroughly understood and realized in His own experience this world, the world of devas, of Mara, of Brahma, samanas and brahmans, mankind of all classes, He declares His knowledge.' This is quite an important point. It makes it clear, in a way, where Buddhism begins, where the spiritual life begins, or where the spiritual life as understood in Buddhist tradition begins. It begins with the Buddha's personal experience; it begins with an enlightened individual, it begins with someone who broke through, so to speak, into Buddhahood; begins with the Tathagata. And he simply makes known his knowledge. He has attained to a certain level of understanding, certain degree of knowledge, certain degree of enlightenment, and he just makes that known to others, he just talks about his own experience. We shouldn't be misled by the rather formal language. It's as though the Buddha was saying, 'Well, someone arises in the world who has a certain spiritual experience, and he talks about that to other people.' This is, in effect, what the Buddha is saying - this is how it all begins: it begins with [51] an individual talking about his experience as an individual to other people, to other potential individuals. This is how Buddhism begins; this is how, you know, this is what Buddhism is all about: it's one person of greater insight, talking to another person, of lesser insight, about his experience, it's sharing his experience. So, 'He preaches the Truth, lovely in its origin, lovely in its development, and lovely in its consummation.' Here's another stock phrase. 'Truth' in the original is, of course, the Dhamma. 'Preaches' is a very unfortunate word because it has all sorts of connotations of, you know, Sunday mornings in church, for us, but the Pali word which comes at the end - by the way, not at the beginning, that, again, makes a difference - is pakasati. Pakasati is connected with the word prakasha, which is the Sanskrit form. Prakasha you know? You know the person called Prakasha, but why is he called Prakasha? What does prakasha mean?

Ruciraketu: Something to do with the fact that he's a printer.

S: Ah! You've got hold of one little bit of it.

Ratnaketu: Is it a sort of 'giver of light' or something like that?

S: Yes. It's to do with light: prakasha is light, radiance; that is, sort of 'light which goes out'. In modern India languages, to print, or publish, is also prakashati in modern Indian languages, because by publishing something you sort of radiate it. So sometimes this word is translated, this word pakasati, in Pali, not as 'he preaches', but 'he illuminates, he lights up', that's the real meaning. There are no connotations of preaching here. So, he lights up the Dhamma, he lights up the Truth, as he communicates his own experience. Which is 'lovely in its origin'. The word for lovely is kalyana, as in kalyana mitra. It means lovely, good, auspicious. So the Dharma, which the Buddha communicates, is the product, so to speak, of his own personal experience of Enlightenment. When an Enlightened person starts communicating to an unenlightened person, when he starts trying to put across his own inner spiritual experience, that is the Dharma. And that Dharma is kalyana in the beginning, kalyana in the middle, kalyana in the end. There are various interpretations of this. Some say it means that Dharma,

or the Dharma, is kalyana or [52] auspicious in all its parts, others say that this refers to the three periods of life, that it's kalyana at the beginning of life, kalyana in the middle of life, kalyana at the end of life. In other words, it will benefit you at whatever time of your life you practise it.

So, 'He makes known the religious life.' Well here again a word with all sorts of connotations - what's religious? It's brahmacariya. Brahma means high or lofty or noble; cariya is walk or practice, or even life or experience. So you could say it is the higher life, or the spiritual life. He makes known the spiritual life, he makes known the higher life, he makes known the noble life.

'Its meaning and attributes, in its entirety and perfection.' So in a way there are three stages here. First of all, a Buddha arises, an individual arises with a certain spiritual experience, he communicates that to others, his communication of his experience to others is the dharma; and he communicates it to them in such a way that it becomes a means of growth and development for them. It becomes for them a path of spiritual life. Do you see how this comes about?

So you can see how that differs from some other religions? To use the word 'religious' here or to include Buddhism under this heading. For instance, if you think in terms of Judaism, how did Judaism really begin? It begins with, you could say, Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with these tablets which God had given him, and he says to the people of Israel, well, 'God has given me these tablets and so, since they've come from God, you've jolly well got to obey them.' This is how Judaism started. But Buddhism doesn't start in this way. Buddhism starts with the individual spiritual experience of a quite exceptional person, who then talks about that experience, who shares it with other people. And because he shares it with them, they are able to get some inkling of it and they're able to begin seeing things in the way that he sees them, and to practise accordingly. In the end they achieve the same insight that he had achieved. And this is all that Buddhism is really about. I mean this is the essence of the matter actually.

So supposing, for instance - to give an much smaller example - supposing you, as an individual, you practise the metta bhavana and you have a quite considerable success with it, or even just a moderate success; you're quite pleased with that, that you've changed your consciousness to some extent. So you talk to other people about it, you [53] share your experience of that metta, with other people, and in any case maybe they can pick up something of it from you. And they say, 'Well, that is interesting! How do we do it? How do we practise it?' And you just explain how it is done. And then they practise and they have the same experience as you have had. So within that very limited context, on that comparatively lower level, you have done whatever the Buddha did; you have had a certain experience, you've talked about it with others, you have communicated it to others, and as a result of your communication of that experience of yours to others, they have been able to have some understanding of it, and on that basis to practise, to follow a spiritual path, or path of meditation practice in this case - and in the end, attain the same experience that you had achieved. So this is the sort of process. It is a sort of sharing of experience, a communication of experience.

So this is how it started at this highest level in the case of the Buddha. And his initial, as we call it, 'preaching' or his initial illumination of the truth. So then what happens? Go on to the

next paragraph.

'A householder, or a householder's son, or a man of ordinary family, hears the Teaching. He comes to feel confidence in the Tathagata. Possessed of this confidence he reflects: The household life is cramping; it is a path choked with dust; to leave it is to come out into the open air. Settled in a house it is not easy to lead the Higher Life in its complete purity, polished like a conch shell. Surely I should shave my head and beard, put on the yellow robe, and, leaving my home, go out into the homeless life.' In course of time he gives up his possessions and circle of kinsmen, small or large, shaves his head and beard, and, taking the yellow robe, goes out into the homeless life'.

S: So this paragraph describes the effect of the Buddha's making known of the Truth to an ordinary person. 'A householder, or a householder's son, or a man of ordinary family, hears the Teaching.' He hears the Buddha proclaiming or illuminating the Truth. And, 'He comes to feel confidence in the Tathagata.' The word for confidence is of course sraddha, which is in a way more than confidence, it is faith, it is the sort of emotional response to the Buddha and to what the Buddha is saying. And 'possessed of this confidence he reflects; the household life is cramping, it is path choked with dust; to leave it is come out into the open air, settled in a house it is not easy to lead the higher life in its complete purity, polished like a conch shell.'[54]

'Higher Life' again is here brahmacariya. So what sort of effect has the Buddha's making known of the Truth that he had discovered had on this ordinary person?

Ruchiraketu: It's shown him the limitations of his ...

S: Yes! It's shown him the limitations of his present way of life. Here it is put in terms of the household life, and leaving the household life and becoming a monk. But in a way, we have to be careful not take that too literally. What it really means is that, yes, one is shown the limitations of one's present way of life, one is shown how cramped and narrow one's whole life is. 'The household life is cramping - it is a path choked with dust; to leave it is to come out into the open air. Settled in a house it is not easy to lead the Higher Life in its complete purity, polished like a conch shell.' Do you think this is still true, do you think that a literal going forth is still necessary? Or to what extent?

Ratnaketu: I think it is very helpful.

S: In India, in ancient India, it was a comparatively simple matter, it was clear cut; that you literally walked out. And, as the Buddha says here, 'Surely, I should shave my head and beard, put on the yellow robe and leaving my home, go out into the homeless life?' So at that time yes, the issue was quite straightforward, quite clear cut. Is it as clear cut and straightforward now? There is of course the point that people won't support you now. Even the state won't support you for very long; a couple of years maybe.

Paul: (unclear) is creating the conditions, if you have got a family, so you can - you might be a - you still want to keep the fa - keep, have some contact with the family but make the conditions that you can create more time for yourself.

Ruciraketu: Because in the Buddha's time there were extended families and the family would

be all right, maybe, if you just walked out.

S: Yes that is true.

Paul: (unclear) ?the only one I've been ?seeing.

Ruciraketu: Whereas now it's much more complex. If you walked...

S: Well now, of course, I mean even if you walk out, well there is social security for other members of the family, if necessary. There is a safety net of sorts. That isn't so, of course, in India, I mean now, to the extent that it was, because there are some nuclear families there now, and if the main bread-winner walks out, well they could starve.[55]

David: If one took this to its logical conclusion, if all householders followed the teaching, what would happen? Do you see what I'm getting at?

S: Well, if all householders followed the teaching, well presumably they'd all be well on the way to Enlightenment! (laughter)

David: Yes, but it seems it requires the support of people that are not prepared to take that step.

S: Well that is the ancient Indian system. So, if you've got everybody taking that step, obviously they'll have to reorganize society completely, which might be a very good thing. You'd have to organize the production of food, for instance, on a different sort of basis. Maybe you wouldn't produce things which weren't really necessary; you would not be producing luxury goods. If you just go round any sort of shopping centre, how many things are not really necessary at all? So it wouldn't take us, I think, much time and energy to produce just those things which were necessary. Suppose everybody had gone forth and they found there were no householders to supply them with food and clothing, well they'd just have to organize the production of those things among themselves and no doubt they'd do it in a much simpler and probably more effective manner.

In any case, that is to some extent what happens in the FWBO because there is not an outside world ready and willing to support us. We have to support ourselves. People have to become involved in Right Livelihood, that's sort of, in a way, in a sense, the middle way. One extreme is you're just involved in a job, and ?eating a living, in the ordinary way, just for the sake of your own comfort and enjoyment, and supporting a family and keeping up with the Joneses and all that sort of thing. On the other extreme is the ancient Indian system, whereby you don't work, you're supported by society. But sometimes the society that supports you is not living very skilfully; you often find in India that it is very rich people, who maybe have made their money in all sorts of immoral and even illegal ways, that are supporting religious movements, and it cannot be a very comfortable thing for someone who has gone forth to be supported by people who've made their money in that sort of way. So it's better probably for us nowadays to follow a middle path and support ourselves through our co-ops and in other ways, so that not only are you practising Right Livelihood yourself, but you are a means of other people practising it. It cannot be a wholly skilful situation if it is made possible for you to lead a full-time spiritual life by people who are making the money, which goes to finance [56] your spiritual life, you know, through quite un-dharmic means.

So, 'In course of time he gives up his possessions and circle of kinsmen, small or large, shaves his head and beard, and, taking the yellow robe, goes out into the homeless life.' So what does that represent - that going out into the homeless life? Again, in ancient India it was - it still is - a literal going forth, and I think it still does have to be literal, to a great extent. You literally go forth; you leave the old situation behind you. But what you have to be careful not to do is that you don't make, or you don't create, a new situation for yourself pretty much like the old one. You do see that sometimes with people, you know. You used to see it a bit in the old days, you know, people would be quite deeply affected by what they heard, deeply affected by the Movement, and they might give up their job, you know, give up their home, leave their wife, you know, sort of go forth; but after a while they find themselves with a girlfriend, and the girlfriend wants to settle down, you know, so they get another house, and then of course to keep the house going you have to get another job. So he's back where he started from, you see. There's that tendency to reproduce the same pattern if you're not careful. So you really have to go forth and create a new sort of pattern, a new sort of world, a new sort of society. So if your going forth is going to end up in that sort of way you might just as well have saved yourself the trouble - stick with the old situation! (chuckles)

That's very easy and it doesn't always happen in that crude and obvious fashion; one really has to keep on going forth. It isn't, in this modern world, something you just do once on a particular date and after that you're all right, you've left the world. No! You have to sort of leave every situation that comes to be binding and restricting. So in whatever situation you are, whether you're living at home, or whether you're living in a community, or whether you're living on your own, you have to ask yourself, well, has this situation become restricting, has this situation become cramping? If it has become cramping, all right, I must leave it. You might even be in a meditation centre, but you might find, if you're honest, that you've just got into a dull routine and you weren't really making any progress. So then you have to consider, well, maybe I should go forth from this situation.

So going forth isn't just going forth from the conventional [57] household life, to the conventional monastic life. I've mentioned that, in some Buddhist countries, when a young man becomes a monk he just moves out of his parental home, moves down the street into the local vihara and his mother brings him his meals every day! (laughter) Well that isn't much of a going forth, you could say, yes? But this is actually what happens in some Buddhist countries, in the villages. You know, when he reaches the age of sixteen or seventeen, well, it's a good thing to become a monk, so he just moves into the little vihara at the end of the village, and he starts learning Pali and all that, but his mum's not far away and she comes trotting along every day with his lunch and all that, but now, of course it's called dana! But, you know, it remains much the same.

Ratnaketu: She earns merit from it.

S: And she earns merit from it! (laughter) But it hasn't been much of a sort of going forth. So you have to be going forth all the time. So going forth is the leaving, in the interests of your development as an individual, of any situation which has become stuffy and confining and which is no longer actually helping you to grow. You may be living in a spiritual community, but you mustn't assume that just because you are living in a spiritual community, well, you must be growing. You have to take a closer look at it than that, say, well ask yourself, am I growing? Is this helping me to grow? Or am I just settling down? Is it becoming a bit home-like? And it can become a bit home-like even if mother isn't around, even if there is no

wife and family around. If you're not careful, you can settle down and make things a bit home-like, a bit comfortable, a bit, in the end, a bit stuffy. So again you need to go forth. So it's the principle of going forth which is important, leaving behind the old situation, moving out into a new, more liberating situation, in which you will grow.

Paul: (unclear ... Seems we think about that as will ... ?) is that I - If some decide to have a long term commitment to a certain - say ten to fifteen years, now would he see his commitments, like to a community. Would he ... stay in, actually, like in Sukhavati, for that length of time?

S: Well you have to balance one thing against another. I mean, [58] going forth must be a very positive experience. The going forth shouldn't be just a sign or symptom of restlessness. I mean sometimes you find people who, you know, are connected with a particular centre for a few months, or they join a community. They live in it for a few months, then they start getting restless, they want to move on; that is not going forth, they need to come to terms with their restlessness, they need to stabilize themselves. I don't like to use the word 'settle', it's not a question of settling down, it's more like a question of settling up. But they need to settle in a positive way and get into a regular practice, in a regular, positive, skilful way of life. So it isn't just a question of staying where you are, or just a question of moving out. It's a question of whether you are growing. If moving around from place to place, spending only a few weeks in one place, does help you to develop, that's fine, that's right for you; but if it only makes you restless, or if it's just an expression of your restlessness, that's not good. You can stay in the same centre, the same community, maybe for ten, fifteen, twenty years and be growing all the time - that is possible. But, on the other hand, in some cases, you may find after a few years, you need, in your interests, to move on. It may be that that particular centre, or that particular community, isn't giving you everything that you need. You may need something different, you may need a different emphasis; you may feel like getting more into meditation, or more into study. So you move into some other situation where you can pursue those things more easily. I mean, at one point you may decide you need to go forth into a building team; but again a point may come when you decide, well, even this situation, positive as it once was, has become a bit restricting. So you conclude you need to go forth from the building team into some other kind of situation, because, you know, you've reached another point in your personal development; you need something different now; you've got into your physical body sufficiently, you've stirred up your energies quite nicely, so now you want to do something else, and need to do something else.

So you see the general principle. It's true that, yes, in the Buddha's day going forth was literal, and was going forth [59] from a sort of lay life into a sort of monastic life, as it afterwards came to be called, but that's only one way of doing it. The principle is broader and deeper than that: it's going forth from any situation which has become limiting and confining, even if it's a so-called religious or so-called spiritual situation. You can go forth mentally, go forth emotionally as well. It's not confined just to the physical going forth, but the physical going forth is also important; in fact it's necessary - even sort of going forth from familiar surroundings, going forth from one's own country, one's own culture. All that helps. It does help one to grow and develop.

Ruciraketu: It's quite interesting here that it's only after some faith has arisen that he reflects that it's cramping. So you can't really go forth unless you've got faith of some sort.

S: Well, the faith arises, I mean, from his contact with the Buddha. I mean he's affected by what he hears, he's affected by what the Buddha tells him of his own experience, he's affected perhaps by the example of the Buddha - he sees the Buddha leading a different kind of life. So one need not take it as far as that - it need not be a Buddha - but, you know, you, while leading your own sort of stuffy narrow little life, you come into contact with someone who is freer, you know, who isn't leading that sort of life, and you're affected by that, you're affected by what you see of him, you're affected by what you see of his way of life, and, you know, you're affected by what he has to tell you. Maybe he seems happier than you, more positive than you, seems to be doing more with his life. So a sort of faith arises, a confidence arises in you that you, well, yes, he's doing the right thing. Maybe I could do that, maybe I could move out of my present situation, maybe I could move into a more creative situation - one which would enable me to develop more. You know, that's how it goes.

Ruciraketu: Because like, it's no good encouraging somebody to, say, leave their family and move into a community and all that, unless they actually have a connection with ...

S: Yes, that feeling. Yes.

Ruciraketu: Yes, the faith.

S: Our, it's I mean, [not] just intellect.[60] It's very doubtful if anybody nowadays would take that sort of step just out of intellectual conviction. There'd have to be some confidence, some faith, to move them and to inspire them.

So, 'In course of time he gives up his possessions.' You notice the Buddha says, 'In course of time.' He doesn't act hastily: 'In course of time' - when he's thought it over, when he's made proper arrangements.

'He'd give up his possessions and circle of kinsmen, small or large.... shaves his head and beard, and taking the yellow robe, goes out into the homeless life.' The yellow robe, in ancient India, as well as modern India, as it were tells people that you're someone who has gone forth, someone who doesn't have an occupation, who is not earning money. Someone who needs to be fed and looked after. So people, you know, on the lookout for holy men, to whom they can make offerings, spot you in the distance, they see your yellow robe and, you know, they just invite you. I've had this experience many a time, you know, walking about in India. I mean, pious people are on the look out for holy men that they can feed. So they know you're a holy man because you're wearing a robe, you see. A yellow robe says, you know, 'I'm a holy man, which means I don't have a wife, family, house, job' - you need feeding - it's like saying, 'Please feed me.' So these pious people, they invite you in and they feed you. Then you go on your way. (laughter) That was the system then. Very, very simple.

Anyway, what happens after that. 42. Someone like to read that?

Duncan: 'So he lives the homeless life, keeping the Rules of the Order, having his senses under control. He is complete in observances regarding food and behaviour, seeing danger in rules, he disciplines himself in the precepts by means of good body-action and good word-action. He leads a pure [61] life, is complete in the moralities, the doors of his senses are guarded. He is mindful and aware, and is possessed.'

S: 'So he lives the homeless life, keeping the Rules of the Order.' This is the first mention of the Order. There's a bit of a jump here. He, you know, goes forth into the homeless life, but then encounters other homeless ones who have gone forth in the same way, with the same kind of faith; and they sort of bond together. They bond themselves into, not a family-type group, but a spiritual community, primarily to encourage and inspire one another - this is what it is really all about.

So, 'He lives the homeless life, keeping the Rules of the Order.' May be that doesn't have a quite positive connotation for us: 'keeping the Rules of the Order.' But what does that really mean? 'Keeping the Rules of the Order'? Could one put it more positively?

Ruciraketu: Observing the precepts, perhaps?

S: Yes, but even more positively than that.

Ratnaketu: Living up to the ideals of the community?

S: Living up to the ideals which everybody in the community accepts. For instance, everybody in the community, everybody who's gone forth, accepts that violence is not a good thing. It's not that there is a rule, 'Thou shalt not be violent,' which you've got to obey - that this is a rule of the Order, but it's accepted that if you want to develop spiritually, well, violence is not the way - non-violence is the way. So you encourage one another in the practice of non-violence. It's not that if someone happens to be violent he's broken a rule! You sort of haul him in front of, you know, the other monks, and try him, and punish him. You know, that's not the idea at all, though it may sound like that. The word 'rule' may conjure up all those sort of images in our minds. There's a sort of consensus about what helps people to grow, what helps people to develop. So if someone who is supposedly trying to develop does something which doesn't help him, which doesn't help anybody [62] to develop, well other members of the spiritual community they become aware of that, they talk to him about it, they point out to him that, well, that isn't the way to develop, he shouldn't have done that; so they try to get him to see this and to, in a way, repent of what he's done, put himself on the right path again. This is the sort of thing that happens. It's not a question of there being an order with a body of rules that you've got to obey if you want to be a member, if you don't want to be expelled.

But remember when I came back from India, when I was staying in the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, and when I was seen, you know, very much as a monk, you know, by visitors, especially Christian visitors, this is always one of the questions I was asked by people who came to interview me for newspapers and magazines: 'What sort of rules do you observe?' And they imagined there being a very sort of strict body of rules that you had to observe, otherwise terrible things would happen to you. That is the way they saw things. So we have to be very careful how we understand this 'keeping the Rules of the Order'.

'Having the senses under control.' This is quite important; this will be explained more later.

'He is complete in observances regarding food and behaviour, seeing danger in rules.' What do you think this means - 'seeing danger in rules'? It doesn't mean quite what you might think it means. It means seeing danger in breaking rules, but again, it's to be understood in the light of what I've just said.

'He disciplines himself in the precepts by means of good body-action and good word-action. He leads a pure life, is complete in the moralities, the doors of his senses are guarded, he is mindful and aware, and is possessed of content.' Ah, this is all explained in detail in what follows. That's just the sort of little summary. Just one point, though. He says, 'He ... is complete in observances regarding food and behaviour', etc. So this is quite [63] significant: that he is complete in observances, etc. So what is the significance of that: that he is 'complete'?

Paul: Engage his energies in, in ...

S: Engages all his energies, yes. He's thorough, not half-hearted (pause). All right '42' - someone like to read that?

Ratnaketu: 'How is the bhikkhu complete in the moralities? Here, Maharaja, the bhikkhu, having abandoned the taking of life and continued to abstain therefrom, having once used stick and sword, feeling shame now shows kindness to all beings; he lives their compassionate friend. To him this is morality.'

S: So the principle of non-violence, this is the first precept. You know 'panatipata veramani sikkhapadam', 'abstention from causing injury to other living beings'. It's put quite concretely: 'the bhikkhu, having abandoned the taking of life and continued to abstain therefrom, having once used stick and sword, feeling shame now shows kindness to all beings; he lives their compassionate friend. To him this is morality.' But again, it's not a question so much of observing rules as of cultivating a certain kind of attitude which results in a certain kind of behaviour. It's not also just a matter of abstaining from life, it's abstaining from injury to other living beings.

Ruciraketu: Yes. We've had this quite recently where someone couldn't see that being like a vegetarian was just like an attitude which you had. They sort of saw it as - like we were all vegetarians, then we must all be obeying the same rule.

S: Yes. Ah, yes, right. There was a strict rule - if you were sort of caught eating meat you were punished.

Ruciraketu: Yes, yes.

S: Yes. Of course everybody wanted to eat meat, would have liked to eat meat, [64] but the rule was that you shouldn't, you mustn't.

Ruciraketu: Yes, yes.

S: Yes. In this connection, ah, there was a little incident that happened recently, of some interest. We got an invitation from a Buddhist centre in some other part of England - Theravada Buddhists - to send along someone to read a paper on the Abhidhamma - there was a sort of Abhidhamma conference - so we thought we might send Sagaramati. But anyway, we read further down the letter and it said 'For the convenience of all those attending the food would be non-vegetarian'!

Ruciraketu: Gosh, yes.

S: Yes, and they all - there were so many bhikkhus attending and others. Anyway I told Subhuti to write, you know, politely refusing the invitation and to say that we wouldn't be able to send anybody along because we were all vegetarians so it wouldn't be convenient to have non-vegetarian food in our case! (chuckles.)

Ratnaketu: Actually this thing about being a vegetarian, I mean, this person said, well, he said two things: that, one was that there'd been lots, you know, that he'd met lamas - Tibetan lamas, and that, - who made a point of eating meat, almost; and the other was that, because - what's the point of being a vegetarian because all these animals are killed anyway and there is always going to be people who want to kill and are prepared to do it - so what's the point of being vegetarian?

S: But that's not the point really because the point is your own attitude. What you need to develop is this attitude of kindness to all beings, and being, or living, their compassionate friend. And you can hardly do that, you know, if you're engaged in - well, eating meat then. Otherwise you could apply this to any precept. Say, well what's the use of not telling lies - everybody tells lies - even if I don't tell a lie, it's not going to make any difference. But that's not the point, you've got to make a start somewhere.[65] You start with yourself and you try to influence others in that way, so that, you know, they live more positively.

David: It seems to me this is one of the key things of Buddhism - that certainly appealed to me when I discovered it.

S: Yes. Right.

David: Because it was what it was doing to your state of mind...

S: Yes, and your own life and - through you - actually to other people.

David: Right. (pause)

S: So non-violence is the first principle. I've been thinking in this last year or two in fact that people don't attach enough importance to this principle of non-violence, they rather take it for granted - even in Buddhist circles, even in the FWBO. There's much more to it than one might think, you know, from this little paragraph. It implies an entirely different mode of operating. Sometimes we speak in terms of, you know, operating according to the power mode and operating according to the love mode. By power here we mean force. But if you think about it, I mean, so much of life, so much of society, is just based upon the power mode, it's based on force, and if you want to follow the spiritual life, if you want to develop, you have more and more to abandon that power mode and operate in accordance with the love mode, operate in accordance with metta. Yes, and 'living their compassionate friend', that implies that you don't invoke the power mode, you don't use authority, you use it as little as possible, whereas there are many ways of exercising power and, you know, apart from hitting people with a stick or sword. People exercise power in all sorts of subtle ways, you know, like through emotional blackmail and things of that sort: bring all sorts of subtle pressure to bear on people, playing on their guilt feelings. All these are ways of exercising power and all these are really violence.

So non-violence is a much more comprehensive thing than people usually think. [66] It

doesn't mean just not hitting people, and not actually killing them or spilling their blood. It means, you know, refraining from coercing them; it means encouraging them, yes? It means giving them cups of tea in bed in the morning instead of striding in with a big whip (laughter), if you see what I mean. Though of course there is such a thing as fierce friendship, yes (laughter). We mustn't forget that. So, if someone just seizes you by the toes and drags you out of bed, with a big smile, that's just fierce friendship - that's not violence. There is a story about Mahatma Gandhi in this respect. It's quite a sweet little story - you might like this. You know, Mahatma Gandhi was a great advocate of non-violence. So once, quite playfully, he just gave a small boy a little pinch, yes? So he said to the small boy, 'Is this violence or is it non-violence?' So the boy said, 'It's neither: it's love.' (laughter) So Mahatma Gandhi was quite pleased with that reply.

Paul: Yes - because a lot of people get mistaken with non-violence to be like you've got to be wet and woolly like it's (not clear) you go walking around with a big grin on your face all the time, and it's not - or at least you've got to (explain ...)

S: Or a meek sort of person who can't say boo to a goose, yes.

Paul: It's always brought up - you've always got to be ... you've either got to be powerful or else completely kind of wet.

S: Of course, there are situations in the world where, yes, you need to use power: but you should know what you are doing - that you are exerting power - and do it quite knowingly. You can do it skilfully sometimes. But within the spiritual community itself power should never be used, because that means it negates what the spiritual community stands for. If you use violence towards another it means you are not treating him as an individual. So, you know, within the spiritual community, supposedly, everybody recognizes every other, you know, member of the spiritual community as an individual: you all want to be individuals, you all treat one another as individuals. So it's quite impossible for you to act violently towards one another. To the extent that you act violently - either [67] overtly or covertly - to that extent you no longer belong to the spiritual community. Even if you speak harshly - which can be a form of violence - to another member of the spiritual community, while you're speaking in that way, well, you're no longer a member of the spiritual community, you're not really an individual, you're not operating according to the love mode, you're operating according to the power mode.

Ratnaketu: Though sometimes - like, say, in a community, in a community, there's somebody who's not really living up to the ideals of the community, and you sort of try various means of encouraging ...

S: Well, now you're talking of the residential spiritual community. I was speaking before of the spiritual community in the sense of the order or sangha; but, yes, carry on anyway.

Ratnaketu: Even in that, this can happen - and you sort of try various means of encouragement, and that doesn't work, it doesn't have any effect; and so, without using power you can - well, maybe you're just using a little bit, but, you express your anger at the situation, or your frustration, or something like that, and quite often some people, they say, just when you're expressing yourself like that, they say that you're trying to force them to be something. In actual fact, maybe you're just expressing how frustrated you are.

S: But, really, you're reminding them of what they have promised to do. It's no more than that. If they cannot be reminded of their own promise, it means, well, they're not serious about that: they don't really belong and don't want to belong to the community, even if they may be on the premises. Of course, I think it helps in the case of the residential spiritual community that - it will help if - when someone joins, it's made very clear what is expected of them, and they quite explicitly commit themselves to that. For instance, that people should keep up a regular meditation practice - that they should be seen in the shrine, if not absolutely every day, well, certainly nearly every day. You know, otherwise if it isn't clearly understood, [68] then a situation may arise where you say to another community member, 'Well look, I don't think I've seen you in the shrine room this week.' And they say, 'Well, what right have you got to force me? I know what I'm doing, I know what is good for me. You don't know what is good for my development. I know better.' You get, perhaps, that sort of reaction, because things haven't been clear, you know, from the beginning.

Ratnaketu: And in fact also, the fact that you live in a community means that you're opening your life up to other people, so that they have got a right to say, 'I didn't see you in the shrine-room'. You can then say, 'Well, I've been ill all week,' or something like that, but ...

S: Yes. Then that at once clears the matter.

Ratnaketu: Yes, but people do have a right to sort of talk, because you've decided to live there.

S: Yes. Well, when you become a member of a spiritual community in that sort of way - in a residential spiritual community, or even a spiritual community in any sense - you give up your private life. We talked about that miccha-ditthi the other weekend, didn't we - that you don't reserve any little area which people are not allowed to criticize, which people are not allowed to comment upon. There's no little sensitive area, with a sort of notice, sort of 'Keep out! This is my private life - no one is allowed to look into this, within this little area I can do as I please.' So there should be no private life in the spiritual community. You shouldn't want a private life. You should want to be, you know, completely open to other people. If you can't be, it means there is a limitation on the spiritual community: so it's not a spiritual community in the full sense.

But, you know, to come back to the point you were really making: to the extent that someone is not an individual, you may have sometimes to use force. You may have to use force outside the spiritual community. Supposing you're a co-op business, and someone doesn't pay up, doesn't pay the bill that you sent him. Well, what can you do? You have to go to court. Going to court means you invoke force. You invoke the authority of the law, [69] which means the authority of the State - that you're entitled to do. But you shouldn't have to do it with other members of the spiritual community. If you do, then that negates the spiritual relation between you. You don't expect to have a spiritual relationship, you know, with people outside in the world, because they operate on a different basis. With them you may have to use power sometimes. But that power, you know, should be exercised not absolutely, but, you know, in subordination to an overall positive attitude on your part. Do you see what I mean? All right, so suppose you, you know, you follow up this particular matter of suing someone for debt, yes? All right, supposing you know that he's got money, he's just playing a game, he's just seeing if he can get away with it. All right, you're quite entitled to sue him, because even though, in a sense, you're invoking force, you're not going to do him any real harm. But

supposing you know that that man is bankrupt, or in real difficulties, well, then you may think, well, how can you take a person in that sort of position to court? So you just let it go, yes? (pause) Anyway, that's the non-violence. Let's pass on to the next paragraph. Like to read that?

Daren: 'Having abandoned the taking of that which is not given and continued to abstain therefrom, taking only what is given he waits for the gift. Committing no theft, he lives as one whose being is pure. To him this is a morality.'

S: So, 'not taking the not given,' - because, here the context is specifically, as it were, monastic, you're dependent on alms, you're dependent on other people, you don't take anything that is not given. Ah, in some Buddhist countries they're quite strict about this in the case of the monks - almost in a literalistic way. When monks are invited to a layman's house for food, you know, for a meal, I mean, the monks sit down, and then the food is brought and placed in front of the monks, but the monks are not allowed - I say 'not allowed' because in a sense that's true, because there is a sort of rule, but the spirit of the thing is quite positive, none the less - that the host has to come and he actually lifts up the plate of [70] food and offers it to the monks, and the monk then accepts it; that the monk can't start eating, unless that has been done. It's a sort of reminder, that you shouldn't take anything that is not actually offered to you. In some Buddhist countries this is quite strictly followed. A monk won't actually take, won't use anything, which is not actually given to him quite literally by being placed in his hand.

Ratnaketu: I heard of an extreme case of that in Australia. There's that, oh that monk out there - who was he?...

S: Yes, Khantipalo, perhaps?

Ratnaketu: Yes, that's him. And he was going on a train journey from one side of Australia to the other, and it takes more than one day, and he had his begging bowl, and all his friends put the food in for more than one day, but he - but, you're only allowed - you're not allowed to store up food.

S: That's right, yes. Only salt.

Ratnaketu: And so, half-way across, when he'd had his first lot of food, he asked somebody, on the train,... he gave his begging-bowl to them, and then, now, they gave it back to him, and so he (not clear something about 'he could say' - 'something'.)

S: Yes. But then I would say that that was going to extremes because - why? I will prove it, yes, because all right, he gave that food to people, yes? So if he gave it to them, whose was it?

Ratnaketu: It was theirs.

S: No, but before he gave it?

Ratnaketu: It was his.

S: It was his, yes? So if it was his, well, it was his. Do you see what I mean? Yes?

Ratnaketu: He doesn't need to receive it twice.

S: I mean, if he couldn't own it on that second day, how could he give it to others? Because he would then be giving something that didn't belong to him, you see? (laughter) So if you want to be very literalistic, you have to be very careful, yes? So actually he was giving to third parties something which didn't belong to [71] him - and that is as bad as theft. (laughter) So in his anxiety not to break a rule, actually he'd broken one maybe even bigger (laughter) by this over-literal-mindedness, yes? Because, I mean, why did the Buddha say that you shouldn't store up food for the next day? Well, it's only to limit greed, yes? But if you are making a train journey and people have given you enough just for the two days, you don't need to go through this business of pretending it isn't yours and handing it back, and then them giving it; this is formalism, you see? This is really being trapped in silabbata-paramasa, in my opinion. Do you see what I mean? Yes?

Anyway, it's an interesting little anecdote. I know him quite well: he stayed with me for some months, in Kalimpong, so ... this wasn't his attitude at that time, but he spent several years in Thailand after that. He is a bit literal-minded. I could tell quite a few other stories of that kind, but I think I won't - it might take too much time. (laughter from Ratnaketu) But, again, you know, in a broader sense, in a non-monastic context, you know, especially, say, in a community, it means, you know, sharing. It means the principle of, well, taking only what you need, and giving what you can. Not taking from others, you know, against their will, even if you've got the ability, the strength, in a sense, to do so. (pause) It means you have to think of one another, yes? Not that each one grabs, you know, for himself, but each one is concerned about the needs of the other, and that is a much better way of doing things. I mean, this is sometimes noticeable at meal-times: that everyone is just concerned with getting what he needs, instead of looking around, especially in the case of guests, to see whether they've got what they need. You can see sometimes, you know, quite a difference in different communities, you know, in this sort of way. But when people are just concerned with getting what they want on to their plate, and they're quite oblivious of, you know, the needs of other people - it's quite animal-like in a way. It's just like, you know, dogs, you know, going each to his own dish and, you know, just only being concerned with what's in his dish. [72]

Ratnaketu: It's amazing how quickly all the Dharma goes out the window as soon as the meal comes around.

S: Yes, yes, yes. It's just one big grab. You see people hungrily looking round, you can see them calculating whether there is going to be any seconds left. (laughter) You can see it, yes? Can't you? You can see exactly what they're thinking, you know, they just sort of shoot a glance across and to see whether they can... (laughter)

Ratnaketu: Well you can't practise the Dharma on an empty stomach. (laughter)

S: I remember an incident in the very early days of ... (laughs) this wasn't quite about seconds, but in the very early days of Sukhavati, when it was still a building-site, and the food was sometimes, well, a bit rough and a bit deficient - I'll never forget this - you know, the lads were all queuing up with their plates, and whoever was serving put just a dollop of something-or-other (laughter) on Robert Gerke's plate - those of you who know Robert Gerke

will appreciate this - and then, of course, was ready to put another dollop on the plate of the next person. And Robert Gerke realized that that was all he was going to get. He looked at it and he said, you know, 'Is that all?' (laughter) - the way he said it was, you know, so sad, and so disappointed (laughter). 'Is this all?' - you know: I can't say it the way he said it, with his, you know, broad American accent. Such disgust and disappointment, you know, as though he had been just waiting all day for that meal, and this was all he got. I mean, that's a bit different, isn't it? (murmurs of agreement)

Paul: Mind you, Alaya used to tell me he used to be up by six o'clock - if not, he didn't get a dinner. Because everyone used to ...

S: There's also the question of sharing in the community - it is better if you can share things. But unfortunately, I mean, the weakness of human nature being such, you know, very often if something belongs to everybody, it doesn't belong to anybody and no one takes care of it. I mean, you find that with vehicles, don't you? If it, I mean, if it belongs to you, well, you look after it, but if it's just sort of communal property people don't bother very [73] much, and that's rather sad because it shows a certain lack of awareness - well, a definite lack of awareness - that you don't care for things which, you know, are community property. I think that's quite a good test of a community that it is functioning successfully, that people do share things, but have a sort of well developed sense of community property, or common property, and don't abuse things just because they're not their individual personal possessions. People are often very careless washing up - they don't bother whether they break things. The plates and the cups and the saucers are not theirs, they just belong to the community, so they don't bother much, and they don't wash up carefully. You'd be surprised how many breakages we have here on retreats; it's amazing the number of breakages. I think scores and scores of things have been broken the last few months. People just don't seem to bother - they just throw things into the bowl quite merrily.

Paul: Because another thing as well is that people might borrow something from someone else, and completely abuse that thing they borrowed. It seems to be a complete... it isn't so much unmindfulness, but it seems to be quite weird.

S: Lack of care, lack of - well, lack of love, you could say, lack of affection, lack of concern.

Paul: I used to find that quite disturbing.

S: Yes, yes, yes. You lend someone a book and it comes back all dirty and dog-eared, or lend them a record, it comes back badly scratched. Or sometimes they borrow something and they damage it, and they don't say anything to you. This sometimes happens. So, you know, that's also quite annoying. Anyway, these are all forms of adinnadana: taking what is not given. But more positively it's generosity. I mean, here the precept is from the point of view of the monk, the recipient, but also it applies to the - there's another side to the story - it applies to the giver. It implies generosity. You try to give rather than to take, or to share rather than to keep to yourself.[74]

David: That's quite a fundamental difference between the two societies, because it would seem in this society, the act of giving is obviously very important, because we don't have the people going forth in that way, really. The opportunity to give doesn't exist.

S: But there are other opportunities of giving; we have to sort of be on the look out for them. All right, someone like to read the next paragraph? Having abandoned ...

David: 'Having abandoned the world and become a follower of the religious life, he lives away from the world and abstains from sexual intercourse. To him this is a morality.'

S: So why does he abstain from sexual intercourse in this monastic context? What does that mean or what does that imply?

Ruciraketu: Contentment.

S: Contentment, but what else? (pause) Well, if he did engage in sexual intercourse, what would be normally the consequences, especially in the Buddha's day?

Ruciraketu and Ratnaketu: Children.

S: Children. And what does that mean?

Ratnaketu: Worldly responsibility.

S: It means a family. It means family responsibility. So that would mean no going forth - he'd settle down again. But what about modern times, I mean, when there are such things as contraceptives, does that alter the case, or not?

Ruciraketu: Well, I mean, responsibilities can arise regardless of whether children come about or not. I mean, just even emotional responsibilities and things like that. So I'd imagine, like, you know, you need to be careful about, well other responsibilities, other than actual children, arising.[75]

S: Well, the question I think which arises for many people or, you know, certainly arises for people, say, in the FWBO: Does the leading of the spiritual life entail complete celibacy? I mean, because if you take the monastic model, this is what appears to be the case. So you can understand it being required in the Buddha's day. But is it any longer required? What would one say to that?

Ratnaketu: Well, there's ... is there a sort of black and white, hard and fast, sort of thing, of following a spiritual life and not following a spiritual life, and if you have sex, then you're not?...

S: Well there is such a thing as not following the spiritual life, that that's clear, isn't it?

Ratnaketu: There is. Yes.

S: Because, you know, you could be performing so many unskilful actions that, well, you're just not following the spiritual life.

Ratnaketu: Hmm... but ...

S: But in this particular case?

Ratnaketu: Is it a black and white thing?

S: Well, is it? What do you think?

Ruciraketu: I think it depends on where you are at, really.

David: It's what you... isn't it what you said about the situation you are living in? If it's restricting you, you have to go forth. It's the same with the relationship - having a sexual relationship...

S: Yes. Right. Yes. But do you think it is possible to have a non-confining sexual relationship, is that possible?[76]

Duncan: Hardly!

S: Hardly. Hmm. Yes.

Duncan: But, um...

S: But you wouldn't rule it out absolutely, hmm?

Duncan: No.

Ruciraketu: Well, again it depends on where you're at, because, like, it might be more confining not to have a sexual relationship, in some cases, than it would be to actually have one.

S: Do you think that would actually be a possibility?

Ruciraketu: I think it is, yes. (laughs)

S: I said, 'would be'. Yes. Right. You know, but in what way, do you think, in what sort of instance, what sort of case?

Ruciraketu: Well - well, you might get someone who doesn't really understand, like, the sort of the reason for celibacy, for example, and they would observe celibacy for, you know, from a wrong attitude.

S: But clearly it wasn't celibacy in that sense that the Buddha was thinking about. It's not simply abstention from sex. I mean, that doesn't really constitute celibacy in the full sense. But maybe one can say - yes - it is a question of whether it is actually confining or whether it is not confining. One has to ask oneself that question. One has to be quite honest with oneself, because here, you know, the possibilities of self-deception are endless.

Ruciraketu: Because I mean, it's even possible to wonder like where we're talking about 'confining', you know, some people might find skilful actions are 'confining' and that it's confined into the skilful rather than the unskilful![77]

S: Yes. Right. Yes. So what does one mean by 'confining'? I mean, let me go back, what was

the, yes, 'the household life is cramping'. It is 'cramping', cramping rather than 'confining'. 'It is a path choked with dust; to leave it is to come out into the open air'.

Ratnaketu: So it prevents you from becoming what you want to become?

S: Yes. Yes. What you want to become in a very positive, a very skilful sense.

Ratnaketu: Becoming your best.

S: Yes. Yes. Becoming your best.

Ratnaketu: So it con...

S: So do you think there is any sexual situation which can actually help you become your best?

Ratnaketu: Yes. I think ...

S: Oh, you do think so.

Ratnaketu: Yes. I do think so.

S: But it isn't necessarily always cramping?

David: Well, even more, it should be helping two people come to the - Buddhism; so it's generosity, too. (laughter)

S: Well, generosity is fine, but it shouldn't be a sort of... a sprat to catch a mackerel - 'Well, I'll be nice to you if you're nice to me', sort of thing, yes? (laughter)

David: Yes. But that's not generosity, is it?

S: No, no. But sometimes generosity in the sexual context is pretty much like that. You know, 'I'll love you but only if [78] you promise to love me.' So really it means that here, also, one has to apply, you know, that principle that determines the nature of the Dharma itself - does it really help you to evolve? Does it really help you to develop? Or, in the terms of this discussion, is it cramping, is it confining, or does it have, to some extent at least, a liberating effect? One has to be quite honest about this.

Ratnaketu: That thing about honesty, actually, with all these, is really important. Just to be, well, honest with yourself - because you might be having a sexual relationship, which might be cramping in a sense, but if you were really honest with yourself, you might find out, well, that is what you want; that you do not - that that's why you ...

S: Yes, yes. Right. You don't want to be liberated.

Ratnaketu: You don't want to be liberated.

S: Right. I mean, it's like the - some of those women in America I was reading about, they

were anti women's lib - so they were going around with big badges on, 'I'm the property of John So-and-so' (laughter) - they didn't want to be liberated; they wanted to be somebody's property. (laughter) Like the little boy who was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up and he said, 'I want to be a sex object.' (laughter) Maybe he didn't want to be liberated, either. Yes, but, you know, sometimes you may have to, in honesty, recognize that fact, that really you don't want to be liberated, you want to be cramped and confined.

David: What would you do if you found that to be the case?

S: Well, would you? The question is, well, whether you wanted to do anything about it.

Ratnaketu: And whether - if you were honest enough to the point that you saw that you didn't actually want to be liberated,... [79]

S: That would be a step forward in a sense....

Ratnaketu: ...well, then you could either leave it there ... [responding to Bhante] Yes.

David: In a sense that's a sort of liberation, I suppose.

S: Well, a very small one - but it wouldn't really count. (chuckles) Mm, yes.

Ratnaketu: You'd have to be honest again and see whether... you could say, 'Well, actually I don't want to be liberated,' like those women - 'I'm the property of such-and-such' - and think, well, that's great, that's okay, it's all right; but if you were even more honest you might see, well ...

S: Well, how disgraceful for a human being, you know, to take that stand, and not want to be liberated, and not want to be... to grow. 'Am I really human?' you might ask yourself.

Ratnaketu: Then you could start to do something about it.

S: Yes.

Ruciraketu: Again, though ... there is this thing of, like, 'In course of time', you know, he does whatever it is. So, like, first he realizes how confining it is, and then he just gradually sort of moves...

S: Yes. You might reflect on that for quite a while and you might feel it more and more strongly, to such an extent that in the end, well, you feel, 'Well there is nothing I can do except just liberate myself from this situation. I've just got to do it, it really is confining, it really is cramping.' And then, you know, you do something about it, because the feeling has become so strong, whereas at the beginning it might have been just a quite mild recognition of the fact that you were being cramped. And also there is the point that as time goes on you feel more and more cramped. So you feel maybe sort of desperate [80] to get out of that particular situation even though at the beginning you wanted to be in it. All right, on to 44. Someone like to read the whole of that right down to a third of the way down the next page?

Ruciraketu: 'Having abandoned the speaking of falsehood and continued to abstain therefrom,

he is a speaker of truth. Linked to truth he is reliable and trustworthy, never breaking his word to the world. To him, this is a morality.

'Having abandoned slander and continued to abstain therefrom, having heard a thing in one place he does not declare it in another to cause dissension with the people. Or, having heard a thing elsewhere he does not repeat it here to cause dissension with the people there. Thus to the disunited he is a conciliator - to the united he is one who strengthens the existing union. He takes delight in peace and his words make for peace. To him, this is a morality.

'Having abandoned harsh speaking, he continues to abstain therefrom. Whatever words are pure, comforting to the ear, kind, reaching to the heart, gentle, gracious to the people, such is the quality of his words. To him this is a morality.

'Having abandoned trivial conversation and continued to abstain therefrom his words are timely and in accordance with the truth and of things bearing advantage - of the Dharma and Discipline of the Order. His speech is as a hidden treasure. It is in accordance with the occasion, cumulative and endowed with gain. To him this is a morality.'

S: So this is the usual description of right speech, first of all 'having abandoned the speaking of falsehood and continued to abstain therefrom, he is a speaker of truth. Linked to truth he is reliable and trustworthy, never breaking his word to the world. To him this is a morality.' This is quite important, this never breaking one's word. We talked about this quite a bit on a retreat here a couple of weeks ago. It's as though there's a sort of agreement between and other people, in a way, to speak the truth, because if you don't speak the truth to other people no social life is possible, [81] no relationship is possible. If you don't speak the truth you can't be relied upon. So speaking the truth is very important because reliability is important, without reliability there's no interaction, there's no life in common, there's no communication. People should be able to depend upon you, should be able to depend upon your word, not only about what has happened, but about your future intentions. This is why, if you say to someone I will do such and such a thing, you should do it. If you don't, if you break your word, you are letting other people down. You're proving unreliable, untrustworthy, it's a breach of communication, it's a breach of faith. So this is quite important. I think people are very often slack and very lazy in this sort of respect. They may not actually tell a lie, but they will break a promise and that is really as bad.

Ruciraketu: Sometimes it is very difficult though to sort of refrain from making promises, like if there's a lot of pressure brought on you to sort of...

S: Well, it isn't fair to bring pressure on someone to promise something, which they clearly don't want to promise. Because then the situation which is likely to arise is that they will promise because of the pressure, but when the pressure is removed, well, their natural inclination will assert itself. They won't do what they promised because they didn't really promise. You must be free to promise, which means you must be free not to promise. You can't bring pressure on someone to promise something. That isn't fair. And you've only yourself to blame if you bring a lot of pressure on someone to promise to do something, and then he doesn't do it afterwards you shouldn't be surprised. It wasn't a genuine promise, it was obtained under duress as it were. Though you have to be quite careful, in meetings, of bringing pressure on people. Some people promise,.. well you don't even have to bring pressure: they want to create a good impression and please everybody. 'Oh, great, he's

promised, he's volunteered,' you know, there's a round of applause and he feels good for a while, but that's all - that's what he wanted. You know, he doesn't bother about actually doing the thing. It's as though it's enough that he said he would do it. To him, that is the same as doing it. So very likely he doesn't do what he promised to do. He doesn't realize what a promise is, [82] what a promise involves. But it's very important that people should be able to trust you, to feel that you are reliable. That really cements good relationships with people.

Ratnaketu: I remember when that Indian came and stayed at Sukhavati for a day, he said that amongst the Indians in America, the Red Indians this is, that speech, telling lies, was the greatest sort of sin because the tribe wouldn't allow it, because even if you sort of stole something, or murdered somebody or something like this, and you admitted it, and you told it, well then, you could be trusted to that extent, but if you just told a lie, well then you just couldn't be trusted with anything.

S: Yes, because that means that no tribal life is possible, no social life is possible, no human communication is possible if you tell a lie. It's actually a breach of the relationship between human beings. And the worst kind of lie, according to traditional Buddhism, is when you tell a lie in a court of law, because it's a sort of official lie, you're lying in the most serious of all situations, when there is some question of justice to be administered.

Ratnaketu: It's really difficult nowadays with that, because there are some laws which, like, I don't consider I want to obey those laws, so, I would, I'd feel like telling a lie.

S: But what about telling a lie with regard to a matter of fact, in a court of law? I mean, were you at such and such a place and did you see such and such a thing?

Ratnaketu: That's pretty difficult to say.

S: For instance, did you see such and such a person slipping such and such other person a joint, because, you know, cannabis is illegal, do you see what I mean? Or you might think that cannabis ought not to be illegal. But what do you do? On the one hand you believe that cannabis shouldn't be illegal on the other hand you don't want to tell a lie. But if you don't tell a lie, if you speak the truth, you will incriminate some other person. You [83] can, of course, get out of it, or you wouldn't get out of it legally, by saying that 'I don't believe that cannabis should be illegal, therefore I refuse to act as a witness in this case, and suffer the consequences. You'd probably be sent to jail for contempt of court, or something like that. You could get out of it or evade the dilemma, but perhaps at some personal cost. You might think that you, well, some people would think that they were justified in telling a lie, but I think you have to be very careful before you adopt that stance, because it does really constitute a breach of social life itself. You can't feel good about it even if the lie is justified. So it might be best, in cases of that sort, just to refuse to bear witness, to refuse to be a witness, and just allow yourself to be committed for contempt of court.

Paul: Reliability is another thing I find sometimes a bit frustrating, like someone tells you be here by a certain time and they don't turn up, or they do tell you they'll do something and then don't do it.

S: Well, it's worse than just failing to do something, because you indicated your contempt, almost, for the person that you've given the promise to, say, 'I don't care about you, I don't

care about wasting your time, I don't care if you're disappointed, I don't care if you've been let down.' This is, in effect, what you are saying, and, you know, it's quite bad to say, even in effect, that kind of thing to another person - again it's a breach of human relations. Maybe, you arrange to meet someone to go out for an evening together. He, or she, doesn't show - if it's she maybe that is different sort of situation (laughter), if she doesn't turn up well, it just may be part of the game, if you see what I mean (laughter) - but if he doesn't turn up, well what does it mean? Even if he has just forgotten that is bad, because the promise should be of sufficient importance for him to remember it and to be careful to remember it. But if he doesn't turn up, well it means he just doesn't care about you, your disappointment, loss of time, he doesn't care about the friendship, doesn't care about your relationship. So one must be very careful about these things, they really are important. You cannot be friends with someone who is unreliable, there cannot be a friendship with an unreliable person. But they're not human [84] enough, don't have enough human feeling, to be able to be a friend. They don't feel enough for another human being. They don't feel the importance of relating to other human beings.

Anyway, enough about that. Then: 'Having abandoned slander and continued to abstain therefrom, having heard a thing in one place, he does not declare it in another to cause dissension with the people there. Or, having heard a thing elsewhere he does not repeat it here to cause dissension with the people there. Thus, to the disunited he is a conciliator, to the united he is one who strengthens the existing union. He takes delight in peace and his words make for peace. To him this is a morality.'

Here it's creating social union, harmony, friendship between people, not setting them at loggerheads. And this is obviously of the greatest importance within the spiritual community itself. You tell positive things about people to other people so as to create a better understanding amongst them. You don't go round saying, 'Well, do you know what he said about you, he said such and such,' and then you go to the other person and say, 'Do you know what he said about you, he said such and such.' In that way you get them at loggerheads. So this is what is meant by slander and backbiting.

Ruciraketu: There's another sutra, I can't remember which one it is, where somebody asks the Buddha on what occasions will he speak and he gives a whole list of things, but he didn't necessarily, because the Tathagata will only speak speech which is concerned with the goal, is basically what it came down to. Even if it was true, he wouldn't necessarily say something.

S: Yes, there's a lot of truth in it, one doesn't need to waste one's time talking about!

Ruciraketu: That's right.

S: Not to speak of false things. Anyway, that's pretty clear isn't it? Then, 'Having abandoned harsh speaking he continues to abstain therefrom. Whatever words are pure, comforting to the ear, kind, reaching to the heart, gentle, gracious to the people, such is the quality of his words. To him this is a morality.' Does this [85] mean one should never speak strongly? Is it possible to speak strongly but at the same time affectionately, do you think?

Paul: Yes.

S: It is, yes?

Paul: Yes. Say if you have, if you are concerned for the other person you can definitely can speak very strongly to someone, usually harsh speech is something you're just trying to push him down, you just want... you're not treating him as a human.

S: Yes. But still one has to be very careful that one is really just speaking strongly, and not, in fact, speaking harshly, and not trying to force the (?).

Ratnaketu: I was just thinking, listening to this bit about how in this way - infantile behaviour.

S: Right. Then, 'Having abandoned trivial conversation and continued to abstain therefrom, his words are timely, in accordance with the truth, and of things bearing advantage - of the dhamma and Discipline of the Order. His speech is as a hidden treasure. It is in accordance with the occasion, cumulative and endowed with gain.' Gain is 'attha', profit, benefit. 'To him this is a morality.' One doesn't waste time talking about trivial things. Well, this is pretty obvious isn't it? Do you think people do tend to spend time talking about trivial things? I suppose in the world they do. Just listen to any pub conversation or breakfast time conversation (laughter) in an ordinary household. I remember that I heard a conversation between - I'm sorry to say it was two close relations of mine, I won't tell you who they were, but they were married, and I was spending some time with them, and they were sitting at the table by a window and - it was a married couple, yes - the woman looked out of the window and she said, 'Oh, they've painted the house opposite yellow.' So her husband said 'No, dear, I think it's cream'. And she said, 'No, dear. I think it's yellow.' (laughter) And he said 'No, dear. I think it's cream.' And she said 'No, dear. I think it's yellow.' And this went on for about a half hour (laughter) ...[86]

So you see what I mean. I think this is a really good example of trivial conversation. But there is a lot of this sort of thing, you know, in ordinary social life.

Ratnaketu: It's difficult, because sometimes you have to start off sort of trivial.

S: Well, you do. You do have to establish some sort of connection but you just have to be move forward from that. It mustn't be confining, or what was that word which was ... it mustn't be ...

Voices: Cramping.

S: Cramping. But I mean after five or ten minutes of that sort of conversation you do feel cramped. You want to move forward, on to something more interesting, something broader.

Ruciraketu: 'It's green.' (laughter)

S: Yes. So, all right, no harm if you start off talking about the weather or, you know, talking about how your rose bushes are growing or something like that; but do try to pass on to something more interesting gradually; try and deepen the communication. But not just to go on chattering about trivialities. I remember when I was a boy - a small boy, I mean - this was one of the things that really struck me, even at that tender age: how especially the womenfolk of our family could go on talking about utterly trivial things for hours on end. I just couldn't understand this, you know. I used to puzzle about it when I was five or six: 'How can they go

on like this?' If my mother was out shopping and I was being dragged along with her at the - again at the age of five or six or seven at the most - and she'd meet a friend and they'd stop and they'd gabble about all such [un]interesting things and I'd really reflect in my childish head, well, you know, why they're talking about these trivial things? I felt it and I can remember particular instances and occasions. And I still find this when I go to see my relations from time to time. The conversation is very, very trivial. If you just get one relation on their own, well then you can develop an interesting conversation. I mean they're quite intelligent quite often. But [87] if you get two or three of them together it's almost impossible: the conversation is so utterly trivial and they just reinforce one another, and you can't get any way into that. I mean, you might start trying to talk about something more interesting, or, you know, they break in with some other sort of triviality.

David: Why do people do that? You said that,... do you know?

S: Why do they do it? I think it's reassurance, I think it's reassurance. I thought - I mean I have thought about this for some time, but some years ago I was up in Scotland. I was coming back from a retreat, and two people gave me a lift back into Glasgow - I won't mention any names, you might know one of them at least. Anyway, they were a sort of couple, they weren't married but were living together, that is, one male and one female. And one of them was driving - the male was driving. But all the way back to Glasgow there was a conversation going on between them - utterly trivial - even though they had been on retreat. But there was something odd about this conversation, I couldn't quite make it out, it wasn't quite real because they were talking about such utterly trivial and unnecessary things. But then I twigged it. They were deeply unsure, they were insecure, especially about their relationship, and they were giving each other some sort of reassurance, that, okay, I'm ... And again, another thing happened of this sort, again, down in London again with friends with whom I'm still in contact and there was again a couple, and the woman was upstairs doing something, the man was downstairs and he kept calling up the stairs, 'Are you all right?' And she'd call out 'Yes, I'm all right.' And again after ten minutes he'd call up - you know just calling her name 'Are you all right?' And then she'd say 'Yes, I'm all right.' And I thought, well, what is this sort of reassurance? And then I felt he wasn't wanting to give her reassurance as he probably thought he was, he wanted the reassurance himself; and that was why he was calling to her 'Are you all right?' And I think a lot of trivial conversations of this type is just reassuring one another. It's a cover for anxiety. Do you see what I mean? For instance the couple in the car were saying things like, oh, 'You see that tree over there?' 'Oh, yes! We passed it when we came, didn't we?' 'Yes, it's big, isn't it?' 'Yes, it's quite big'. 'Oh, it's quite a nice tree.' 'Yes, it's quite a nice tree,' and 'Oh you see! There's a woman in front of that house. There wasn't a woman in front of the house when we came this way last time, was there?' [88] (laughter) 'No, I don't think there was.' And, this is how it was going on - so utterly insane. So there was no objective reason why they should be talking about these things. It was that 'Are you still there, dear? Are you still there? You haven't gone away, have you? You haven't left me?' This is what it is, not only within that sort of relationship, but within the group. 'Oh, you're still there; someone's still around.' You've still got other group members with you. This is - I think this is my suspicion - what it is about. A lot of it is this, you know, demand for reassurance from either another person or from other members of the group in general.

Ratnaketu: They can't just be silent with one another.

S: Can't just be silent with one another.

Ratnaketu: They - if there's any silence, they're sort of ...

S: It's threatening.

Ratnaketu: Threatening. Nobody knows what's happening or ...

S: Yes.

Paul: Least you find tension. If you get two people at least you... who don't really know each other very well, you can sometimes feel the tension if there's a silence.

Ratnaketu: Even if they know each other. Some married people and ... been together for years, but if there is any silence - I think (unclear).

David: I think that's actually a bad example, in a sense. When you're hitch-hiking you've got to accept someone's being generous, possibly because they want company, and it's a bit selfish to sit with someone who's possibly - like a truck driver - who doesn't see many people during the day. Do you see what I mean? Because I've had the same problem with hitch-hiking, and I just came to terms with - if I'm going to hitch-hike I've got to accept the chance, how people stop because these want to talk. So...[89]

Ratnaketu: Well, there's, you can talk for a while, but, that's...

S: It does very, very much. People say sometimes they meet really interesting people, hitching lifts. At other times it can be really wearing, because they're just gabbling on about nothing at all, you know. Perhaps we'd better stop and just have our morning tea.

...

S: Not to try and hurry, and maybe next time I come down to London we can just have a session and finish it off. That would be better, I think, than rushing it. I have to come down, I don't know when, but for at least a couple more Publications meetings before I go to Tuscany. (pause)

Ruciraketu: There is rather a lot in this sutra, isn't there?

S: Yes. Even summarized like this, or condensed like this, there's quite a lot in it. (pause) Anyway, we'll go on. Someone like to read. I've got '45-62': you can see how condensed it is.

Duncan: 'Other practices which the bhikkhu will have abandoned have been mentioned in Brahmajala Sutta i.10-27 in connection with the average
worldling's estimate of the Buddha. They included injury to plants, the eating of more than one meal each day, the wearing of personal adornments. In the present sutta each abandonment is followed by the words: "To him this is a morality"'.

S: There's a whole list of things mentioned in the Brahmajala Sutta, but anyway, here the editor just mentions three things as of some importance. The bhikkhu will have abandoned 'injury to plants'. What does this suggest, in modern terms?

Duncan: Well, that you can't do any gardening, really.

Ruciraketu: It's ecology, perhaps.

S: It's ecology. It's, you know, concern for the environment. In the case of the bhikkhus what happened was this: I mean, they wandered from place to place, and sometimes some bhikkhus were a bit careless - they just walked across fields where farmers had planted seed, and trampled growing crops, and there were complaints to the Buddha. So he asked the bhikkhus not to do that. In other words, there was concern for the agricultural production. So one can look at that in quite [90] general terms, and I think one could say that for someone who is concerned about not just his personal development in the narrow sense, but the well-being of society as a whole, even humanity as a whole, cannot but have some concern for the environment, in the widest sense - the natural environment especially, which is being so much threatened by, you know, modern development.

Ratnaketu: It's an extension of non-violence, really, isn't it?

S: Yes, yes, yes.

Ratnaketu: Creating as little disturbance in the world as possible.

S: Yes. Not sort of bull-dozing the forests and all that, as is happening all over the world. Apparently, the Himalayan forest has been reduced, in the course of the last twenty years, by a third.

Ruciraketu: Gosh!

S: Yes, by a third! I was reading an article about it recently in a magazine, which gave maps showing the area of deforestation. It's enormous, a third of the entire Himalayan forest, mainly in Nepal but partly in India. This has been just destroyed.

Ruciraketu: Is that for wood for buildings and so on, or...?

S: Mainly for wood.

Ruciraketu: Just for burning?

S: Wood for burning. (Ruciraketu: Gosh!) And of course, vast chunks of the Amazonian forest are being just destroyed.

Ratnaketu: I remember Schumacher, in one of his books, said that if the Indians - if the Buddhists, of the people in India - had just followed one thing of the Buddhists, which was to plant a tree, and to look after trees, then India itself would be in a completely different state now; if they'd just done that. But it's completely denuded of trees.[91]

S: Well, the whole of what is now Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in north-eastern India was a vast forest called the Mahavana, the Great Forest, with just little villages and towns in small clearings. The rest was just forest.

Ratnaketu: What is it now?

S: Well it's plain, desert, and of course it is rice fields, because the population has increased so vastly since the Buddha's day that the area under cultivation has been growing all the time. So that may now also suggest that the population needs to be limited, otherwise if you go on cutting down forests and therefore interfering with the rainfall, so you can plant paddy and wheat and millet and the rest of it, well, in the end, the law of diminishing returns sets in and you don't get the rain that you need, because of there being no forest for the crops themselves. So a point comes when you have to strike a balance.

Ratnaketu: Or even I think just careful planning, because I think that you ... the world can sustain a lot of people just sort of ...

S: Yes, but it cannot go on, the population, it cannot sustain an indefinitely expanding population. The time will come when population has to stabilize. There's no sign of that yet, on a world scale. Well they hope it'll sort of level out somewhere about 2500. You are going to see a lot more people. The population of India has doubled in the time that I have been in contact with India, has doubled.

Paul: There's the other side of the coin, though, and a main argument as well, is that I think man needs beauty, the beauty of the environment, to stimulate his growth.

S: Right.

Paul: So he should care for the environment because he needs something, he just needs beauty. You walk down these lanes here, so much, it is just beauty. It is very, very stimulating.

S: Well there are lots of people [who] as soon as they see a beautiful deserted secluded beach they want to build a casino and a discotheque there. To improve it, that is called development.

Paul: Or dump rubbish on it.

S: Yes. Anyway, there's a lot we could say on that topic, but let's pass on.

And then, 'the eating of more than one meal a day'. Of course the bhikkhu was dependent on the laity so clearly he [92] shouldn't take more than he needed. Do you think you could get along on one meal a day, eating at one sitting all that you needed for the whole day, is that really a good thing?

Paul: Probably, if you're leading a hermetic [sic] life it would be - that's all you'd probably need, because you're not doing hard physical work.

Ratnaketu: It depends.

S: It depends.

Ratnaketu: It depends a lot ... like on the climate as well, like ...

S: Right.

Ratnaketu: Most of the energy which humans use is to keep us warm.

S: Yes. I found, I mean, the rule for bhikkhus in ... really is not so much one meal a day, as not eating after twelve o'clock. Whatever you eat before twelve is counted as one meal. I mean, Buddhaghosa says even if you ate thirty times before twelve o'clock, it would still be one meal, which is a bit extreme. Some bhikkhus try to do that, yes? (laughter) because - they start as soon as it's dawn, because you're not supposed to eat before dawn, before you can see the lines on your own hand. That is the rule. But it's not a question of stuffing yourself before twelve o'clock, and then, you know, spending the rest of the day recovering, but certainly moderation in food is the ideal. I mean, this is nearer to it in another - there is a verse in the Dhammapada where the Buddha says moderation in diet, and that is really the principle. You don't take more than you really need just to support yourself, and carry on with your practice. You don't make eating an end in itself. I think young people usually don't, but as you get older and sources of pleasure, you know, become fewer, I mean, a lot of old people tend to become quite attached to their food and to eating. It's one of their few remaining pleasures. I think one should eat sensibly, eat things that really do nourish you.

Voice: Cakes. (laughter)

S: Well, good cakes do.[93]

Ratnaketu: I found it quite interesting when I was on a solitary retreat once, that I only found I had time in a day to have two meals... so that it is...

S: There's the question of cooking, also.

Ratnaketu: Yes, there's cooking and that. Well I didn't want to spend so much time concerned with food. I wanted to do other things. I wanted to be meditating or reading. And I also found that by being on a solitary retreat and having no distractions, eating a meal became much richer, and I didn't need to eat so much because I tasted more of what I was eating.

S: Yes. Well often you eat hastily; you don't masticate properly, etc... just bolt it down, and then carry on working.

Ratnaketu: I know sometimes, when we've been working really hard at Sukhavati, and come home from work, and there's a meal already there on the table - eat it down, and I couldn't tell you what it was! (laughing) when I've finished because, you know, you're just so used to, sort of, rushing about and you know you've got to do something straight afterwards - it's quite bad.

S: I think meals should be leisurely affairs, especially evening meals, and I'm quite against things like working-lunches. I think they're really dreadful. I don't think you can really, not only not enjoy it, but not really digest your food properly, unless you, you know, spend a bit of time over it, and are aware of what you're eating.

David: I'm glad you've said that, thanks.

S: There seems to be a lot of private jokes around on this subject.

Ruciraketu: There are, aren't there! (laughter) I'm getting a lot of meaningful looks!

David: I'm usually the last one to finish eating and they always rush off and...[94]

S: Anyway, abandoning 'the wearing of personal adornments'. What is that all about? The suggestion seems to be that it's wrong to adorn the person. So why should it be wrong, or is it wrong? What was the Buddha thinking of as inappropriate for the bhikkhu?

Paul: Well, in ancient times they used to kind of go over the top.

S: All sort of bracelets and necklaces and, you know, things around the ankles and earrings - I mean men also in ancient India wore all these things. We see it in their art, yes, all sorts of elaborate tiaras and turbans, and belts and ...

Ratnaketu: Silks.

S: But adornment as such: do you think that this is wrong? What is adornment, anyway. How would one define that? (pause).

David: I think it can have two functions: it can either be to impress others - so I mean in that sense it's power; it could also be for you to help feel good towards yourself, which is quite positive.

S: Yes. And I remember a friend of mine in Bombay, many years ago, said something - I forget the context in which he said it, but it did quite impress me at the time. He said, 'whatever we love we adorn.' So it suggests that if you love yourself you will adorn yourself, if you don't love yourself, you won't adorn yourself, hm? So, 'adorn' means to make yourself look as pleasing, aesthetically, as possible; not just to impress others, but just out of your own, sort of, non-complacent, non-self-indulgent delight in yourself, and your love towards yourself.

Ratnaketu: There's a sort of difference: one sort of comes out of the fullness of your own sort of happiness and contentment, and the other one comes from, you want to put on yourself in order to make yourself more attractive to somebody else, or to get something by making yourself - by adding things on to yourself - in order to appropriate ...

S: Yes, I mean as in the case of women's make-up, which is often a sort of disguise following (unclear) that. It's quite [95] interesting that - the difference in fashions here, from time to time. I mean over the last few years men have taken to wearing earrings, haven't they - with just one, more often than not, yes? A few years ago when I came back from India this just was not on, this wasn't done. This wasn't done. This is a quite comparatively recent thing. This is going back to Elizabethan times, when men did wear earrings, and lots of flashy rings, and necklaces and so on, yes, over their armour!

Ruciraketu: Yes! (laughs)

S: But, I mean, in the case of - I mean, decorating oneself, adorning oneself, is supposed to be out in the case of men, isn't it?

Voice: Generally.

S: Generally, though things are changing a bit. So one can't really study men in this respect. But in the case of women, one notices that women who don't care about their appearance, very often don't love themselves, or don't have a very high regard for themselves. So, you know, if there weren't these special social conditionings, or cultural conditionings, applying to men, one could probably apply the same criterion, that if a man was free, socially and culturally free, to adorn himself, but then he didn't, he could possibly be deficient in metta for himself.

Paul: You do get men who wear just, like, really terrible clothes; it's not really taking any, well - I forget the word just now - any pleasure in their actual appearance.

S: Or who don't look after themselves physically.

David: Yes. I was going to say, it's slightly different, but we find that working, don't we? Some houses we decorate where you can't, they're in just such a mess, and you think: 'What sort of state of mind can these people be in - towards themselves?'

S: Right. Yes. Of course, sometimes people are reacting, aren't they? - perhaps with some reason; and I mean we know from our own experience with many of our friends in the FWBO - that some are brought up in very, as it were, middle-class homes, where everything was neat and tidy and orderly and well-dusted and well-polished, and [96] though it's still understandable, it's not creative. Maybe it hinders them from being creative, in certain respects. They're so busy reacting, they have no time to be creative. And there are all sorts of horror stories about housewives. There's one I heard about who would not allow anyone in the family to use the best room, she didn't want the cushions rearranged. So it was never used, no one was ever allowed to sit there, because they might rearrange or disorder the cushions on the settee.

Ruciraketu: I think that kind of thing is quite common.

S: Oh! (laughs)

David: Yes, I had an aunt like that I used to visit.

Ratnaketu: It wasn't like that in our house!

S: But more homey. But some women are sort of fanatically, almost insanely, house-proud; one can hardly live in the house. Everything is kept in such order; it's all so spick and span.

Ratnaketu: I think it's quite a good move, in that men are now sort of more free to dress more beautifully, more colourfully, and to decorate the place, and things. Like I heard one story about things like in Australia, I think it's quite - I think sexual polarity actually causes the thing where the woman is allowed to dress up and the man isn't. And I heard in Australia, a case of a - quite a few years ago - that a man would be embarrassed about watering a plant, because it was a womanly thing to do.

S: Oh well, that is machismo with a vengeance, isn't it, yes!?

Ratnaketu: And I think these things are changing generally; the fact that, you know, wearing all the jewellery and things like that, seems to indicate that things are changing.

S: Or even these - what do you call them? these (Ruciraketu: Bangles?) identity bracelets, and things like that. I mean that would have been unknown a few years ago. Or even wearing things round the neck - gold chains or whatever.

Ratnaketu: Sometimes it goes to the opposite extreme - but I remember [97] with a used-car salesman who we dealt with, and he had all these really strong, heavy sort of gold chains around his neck, and these huge gold rings on his fingers - real gold, I think it was. He was really slick. And it was just, you know, really sort of decoration, but it was like having bits of bicycle tagged around your neck, or something. (laughs)

Paul: You get that in the East End a lot. You get the real sharks, they (laughter) - it was all kind of impression; you're out to impress.

S: It's impression with your money, status etc.

Paul: It's all kind of real gold, and you're kind of ...(laughter)

S: Well, a lot of Chinese have lots of gold fillings, and even perfectly good teeth pulled out, and gold teeth put in. I have met Chinese with all gold teeth in Singapore, yes. This is just to show how rich they are. I did hear about one, I didn't actually see him, who had each gold tooth you know, studded with a diamond. (laughter) That's taking it a bit far - that is adornment, I think, in the sense of which the Buddha was, you know, discouraging it.

Daren: He had a diamond smile!

S: Yes. Yes.

Paul: I think it is quite important for people going to a meditation class actually making a bit of an effort to dress up a bit, like now, just wear some nice clothes.

S: Right. Or at least...

(end of cassette)[98]

S: ... or pujas, most of the regular friends really used to dress up. I mean, on my arrival, Akshobhya was the only Order member there, but some of the regulars were very, very colourful. They used to don, for the occasion of pujas, special very colourful kaftans, and I remember that Udaya used to wear a purple kaftan (laughter) and someone else had a bright green kaftan - you know what a kaftan is don't you? It's a sort of Islamic, Middle-Eastern garment which is rather shapeless, but it's sort of all the way down and long and flowing. And they used to keep these things at the centre and just sort of slip them on before the puja. So it was really quite colourful, all these people, all these young men, in their colourful kaftans. But, as I said, by the time I went again, three years later, this had rather gone out of fashion - you didn't see it.

Ratnaketu: When I became a Mitra, I wore this dotu...

S: That's a golden belt or something. (laughs)

Ratnaketu: No, it was a - what do they call them - dotus or ...

S: Dhoti, yes, yes.

Ratnaketu: Dhoti. Long, sort of ...

S: Yes, flowing and ...

Ratnaketu: Flowing.

S: You must have felt like a bride! (laughter) All in white. You didn't have a sprig of orange blossom in your hair? (laughter) Plenty of orange blossom in New Zealand.

Ratnaketu: I think we became a bit self-conscious. Because it was at the time hardly any beginners were coming along. It was quite a small circle of close friends and you felt you could do that, but then all these people started coming along ...

S: Yes, right.

Ratnaketu: You couldn't really do that any more.

S: Might freak them out too much!

Ratnaketu: (laughing) Yes.

S: But, I did notice down at the LBC not so long ago when I gave a talk, I think it was when I gave my India talk, that on the whole [99] people were a bit more colourful than they had been a few years ago, and I took this as quite a positive sign, a sign that their attitude towards themselves was now more positive. I think men, especially, still need to give quite a bit more attention in this field. I think some of the scruffy old jeans that some of them wear are really quite horrible. Well, if you're working that's different, but when you're no longer working, when you're just relaxing in the evening, or you're attending a class, I think one needs to be a bit aware of one's appearance, both for one's own sake and the sake of other people. Especially if you're taking a class, or even supporting, or being just around, especially as an Order member or, you know, a Mitra.

Ruciraketu: It makes quite a difference when somebody's giving a talk.

S: Yes.

Ruciraketu: If they're dressed quite dull, it's quite difficult to focus on them. But if they're quite bright, it just stimulates an interest.

S: On the other hand one shouldn't overdo it.

Ruciraketu: Like a clown. (laughs)

S: Right.

Ruciraketu: Or a court jester or something.

S: I think it's also quite unfortunate that men - in some ways - are following the example of women, in getting things done to their hair, if you know what I mean, having them sort of permed and things like that. That sort of thing is quite bad for the hair, you know, it kills the hair gradually, it goes sort of dead. I think one doesn't need to have sort of artificial waves put in or anything like that. One does see some young men having these sorts of things done, you know what I mean, sort of having it crimped a bit and, you know, a wave put in the front. That isn't necessary really, in fact you could say it was harmful. Anyway, 'personal adornments'. So it isn't just a simple question of abandoning the wearing of personal adornments, because most people don't have enough personal adornments anyway; they don't have anything to abandon. This is really more a question, for them, of abandoning their usual scruffy appearance. I mean, for them the development would be to adorn themselves a bit more, abandoning the sort of, you know, negative mental states, which make them not adorn themselves and allow themselves to appear so scruffy and down-at-heal.[100]

Ratnaketu: 'Then the bhikkhu, thus complete in the Moralities, perceives no fear from any direction, that is, with regard to restraint in morality. It is just as an established Ruler, having settled with his enemies, perceives no fear from any direction with regard to enemies. The bhikkhu, complete in this noble group of Moralities, experiences within himself an unmixed ease. Thus, Maharaja, is the bhikkhu complete in the Moralities.'

S: 'Ease' here is sukha, which can be translated 'happiness', or 'bliss' even. So what is this about? The bhikkhu who is complete in the Moralities 'perceiving no fear' - just like an established Ruler 'having settled with his enemies'. What does this mean? What sort of mental state is conveyed here? I mean, how does the observance of morality help? How does it work? I mean maybe there - we're a bit sort of confused, even, by this word 'morality'. But supposing it one says instead, well, supposing you're behaving in a completely skilful sort of way, you know, what sort of effect does that have on you, if all your actions are skilful, your words are skilful, your thoughts are skilful, though here we've only dealt so far with actions and words.

Ratnaketu: You've no fear of bad consequences.

S: No fear of bad consequences - not from your own actions, but there could be, you know, unfortunate things happening to you as a result of other people's actions. But how would you feel in yourself?

David: Something I've found is that when you behave like that you start feeling better towards yourself, which makes you stronger so that even if people behave badly towards you, you can sort of...

S: Right. Yes. Because in a sense you've overcome enemies. Maybe that's the point of the comparison; you've overcome unskilful states. So you feel sort of happy, you feel triumphant - you feel more integrated, you feel more at one with yourself. Hence you experience this ease, this satisfaction, this happiness, or this bliss even. Do you see what I mean? You feel more whole, more complete in yourself, more able to cope; you feel more strength, more

integrity, when you're acting in a consistent way, a uniform way, a regular way. You're not just carried away by distractions - you're not just carried away by unskilful mental states, unskilful actions, [101] or words - they all have a sort of scattering effect. (pause)

So this comparison with the king, the ruler, who has settled with his enemies and perceives no fear, this is quite significant; because a ruler is one who is dominant, who has established control. So you are in control, you're in control of yourself, you're in control of your actions, in control of your speech, so that gives you a certain strength, a certain stability, a certain integrity... confidence.

Ratnaketu: But it's also a ruler who knows his enemies, and so it's not like somebody who's sort of holding everything at bay. It's like you know yourself - you know all these aspects of yourself, and your shortfalls, and things like that, so you're not going to be surprised by anything coming up and jumping at you.

S: Right. (pause) You're as it were in charge of yourself. (pause) Anyway we actually have covered the moralities. If you divide the path into three great sections - that is to say sila, samadhi, and prajna - so far, apart from the introduction, we covered sila - so that next time we're able to get together we can go into samadhi and prajna.

So just look back over what we've done this morning, because time is nearly up, and see whether there's any further point, anything you want to clear up before we finish. (pause) The general trend is clear, isn't it? Don't forget the sort of... the context, don't forget the questions which the Buddha is replying to. He's answering a question about the fruits of the life of the recluse. So this is a fruit. 'The bhikkhu, complete in this noble group of Moralities, experiences within himself an unmixed ease.' So this is the fruit, or one of the fruits.

Ratnaketu: And I imagine, using that example of a ruler, that the king, Ajatasattu, would know well what it feels like to lay in bed at night and be afraid of all his enemies.

S: Right! Yes, because he hasn't settled with them. I mean, the introduction itself to the sutta has shown that he's still fearful, he still thinks there may be enemies around, lying in wait to kill him.

David: It reminds me of the conversation at lunch - about the queen.[102]

S: Right. Yes. (laughter) One wonders what she thinks or feels. When Reagan has been shot and the pope has been shot, and then you, as a head of state, have to go out - you wonder, you know, whether you're going to be shot this time - you can't help wondering. And you may know yourself you can't rely absolutely on the police or security arrangements. (pause)

Ruciraketu: There seems to be a distinction in paragraph forty-one between a 'householder' and a 'man of ordinary family'.

S: I mean the term for householder is 'gahapati'; it seems to suggest a man who's got a large sort of household with lots of dependants, maybe people working for him also. Whereas the ordinary person is maybe someone who's just working for somebody else, who doesn't have this big establishment himself, but he's still a layman, and in a sense he's a householder too, but not in the sense that the gahapati is. Gahapati literally means 'house-father', the head of

the household, the lord of the house. (pause) I mean a farmer would be a gahapati, because he'd have his own wife, and his sons, and their wives, and their children, and maybe cousins and brothers and their offspring too, plus all his work-people; and there might be, you know, quite a big circle of dependants maybe up to a hundred people. So he'd be in a different position from someone who just had his own wife and family, and who was just working for somebody else. (pause)

Ruciraketu: It really seems that if you lose contact with, like, the faith or emotional motivation for following, as the precepts and so on, then it's very difficult to actually practise the precepts: because all these - you know, it's so easy to sort of rationalize, or interpret it one way or the other or...

S: Right. Yes. You must really want to practise them, otherwise you probably won't. And also the helpful environment is, you know, very, well, necessary. I remember when I was in Kalimpong, when the Chinese invaded Tibet, droves of monks came as refugees. But within six months, so many of them, even those who had been in monasteries for years and years, had disrobed and were living in a completely different sort of way. In other words, they were really dependent, maybe over-dependent, on the positive environment of the monastery. They weren't really able to continue leading a Buddhist life outside. They just succumbed. They just got jobs and, you know, found wives and settled down. They regretted it - they weren't [103] happy; and they use to say, 'We don't like living like this, but we're just not strong enough to manage by ourselves, to keep up a religious life outside the monastery.'

So, yes, the positive environment is very helpful, even necessary, but you have to be very careful that you don't become totally dependent upon that. You aren't then really leading a spiritual life. because you're being sort of upheld only by your environment, not by anything of your own aspiration. It's really a positive group rather than a spiritual community: because an individual, you know, even if he was sort of thrown out of his monastery, wouldn't go under in that sort of way. Well not in a country like India where there's a lot of support, in any case, for anyone leading any sort of religious life.

Paul: In some ways your environment should like be positive, but the whole aim is to make you function completely by yourself.

S: Yes. Yes. Right. Well, that is part of the positivity, part of the helpfulness. It helps you to be an individual, which means someone who can, if necessary, stand on his own feet without anybody's support. You must be able to function like that.

Ruciraketu: Yes. I remember you said it's not - I think it was with reference to the sangha - that it's not like a warm bath, it's more like a cold shower! (laughter)

S: Ha ha. Yes, I'd forgotten that I said that, but I did, yes. Perhaps I should add, it's not like, you know, a warm bath in the middle of the afternoon, it's more like a cold shower early in the morning! (laughter)

Ruciraketu: The two extremes. (laughter)

S: Or maybe I should say the best kind of, you know, spiritual community, is like having a cold shower, on a beautiful, warm, sunny afternoon.

Ruciraketu: That's it.

Ratnaketu: And a cup of tea on the lawn. (laughter)[104]

S: ...Afterwards. I thought you were going to say a cup of tea brought to you while you were having a shower! (laughter)

Ratnaketu: That would be a bit extreme!

S: I think you'd love it! Like in the film 'If', which was a mythical projection of public school life; you saw the prefect, the head boy, captain, lying back in the bath, and his small fag bringing him a cup of tea. (laughter) I hope I'm not giving you ideas. I saw this film, just to diverge a bit since we have finished, in the States, with some of my American students, and they were really taken by it - they really loved this - they thought this really was the way English people lived, and that everybody went to public school, and this is the sort of thing they got up to: that prefects were lying back in their baths and having cups of tea brought in by their fags. But friends who have been to public school have assured me that that didn't used to happen. Anyway, this is the image of the public school that is projected.

Ruciraketu: That's the school that Subhuti went to, where that one was filmed.

S: Was it? Well, apparently those sort of things didn't go on. In the end part of the fantasy was - there were sort of machine-guns mounted on the roofs and the students were shooting down on popular local figures. (laughter) Yes! It had a quite sort of nasty twist to it towards the end. But, you know, my American students really enjoyed it - they really loved every minute. At one point in the story - I won't tell you the details, that would take too long - they were saying, 'Ah, these Britishers! They're so cool!' (laughter) See, 'cool' was a term of great praise with these Americans. 'They're so cool!' they were saying.

I was surprised how popular everything English or British was with these quite ordinary college students; they really loved it. And several of them came up and asked me afterwards, they say: 'Is it really like that in England?' I used to say, 'Well, yes! In certain sort of limited circles, you know, not very generally.' They were a bit disappointed then. They thought the whole of Britain was just like that. You know, all these old world places and old buildings, castles, and crazy people.

Paul: Oh, well - Sukhavati! (laughter)[105]

S: All right, page 67 then, paragraph 64.

'How is the bhikkhu guarded in the doors of his senses? Having perceived a form with his eye, he is not led away by outward appearance or attributes. As long as he lived with his faculty of sight unrestrained, he experienced the resulting covetousness, grief and evil things. Entered on a path of self-restraint, he protects his faculty of sight and controls it. So with his hearing, smelling, tasting, touching. So with the things of the mind, having perceived them he is not misled by their first appearance or seeming nature. The bhikkhu, complete in this excellent restraint of his faculties, experiences within himself an unimpaired ease. Thus is he guarded in the door of his senses.'

S: So this represents the first step, or the first stage, the first practice, in one might say the systematic or regular path of spiritual development as usually outlined in the Pali canon - the guarding of the doors of the senses. But first one needs to explain what this expression actually means or what it implies. 'The doors of the senses.' What does one understand by this? What is the point or the purpose of the comparison? The senses are compared to doors or gates, so what is the point of that?

Duncan: Well doors can be opened or closed.

Daren: They also lead somewhere. So the senses lead to something.

Ratnaketu: A means of access, or they are openings between two realms almost.

S: Yes, yes. Here, of course, the two realms are the realm of the subjective and the realm of the objective. It is through the senses that you are open to the realm of the objective. It is through the senses that impressions come in. This is the main point here: that through the senses you are open to the external world, you are open to all sorts of sense impressions. So the idea of guarding the gates of the senses is that you shouldn't allow each and every impression to enter. Do you see what I mean? This is the whole point of the comparison: that as you are going about in the course of the day, especially in a place like London, there are all sorts of impressions pouring in on you. Through the eye, through the ear, through the nose, through the tongue, through the skin, and through the mind. The mind here is also regarded as one of the senses. So one shouldn't allow entry to each and every impression. One must, as it were, keep a guard on the gate of the senses and check what is coming in, discriminate between the impressions and those that are going to be helpful allow in and those that are not going to be helpful don't allow in. But what does one mean by 'allowing in and not allowing in'?

Duncan: Well that your mind doesn't attach itself to...

S: Yes isn't affected by them. Doesn't dwell them. But all this suggests [106] something which is quite important as regards actually guarding the gates of the senses - including the mind. And what is that? What does this guarding imply? What is that guarding? Or what does that guarding consist in?

Ruciraketu: A certain amount of awareness.

S: A certain amount of awareness. So really this paragraph is saying that you need to be aware first of all, awareness comes first, and awareness in this particular form, that is, as applied to the impressions that are constantly impinging on you through your five, or rather six, senses. You've got to start discriminating, start screening out. Do you see what I mean? An example one might give is: suppose you are travelling on the Underground. You see so many advertisements and if you're not careful - you just sort of look at the advertisements and they're advertising something attractive that might be pretty useless, or even harmful - but if you're not careful that just influences the mind. You allow the mind to dwell on it. You allow the mind to mentally follow up possibilities, and you might even start developing a definite desire for that particular item. You might even make a sort of resolution that you'll do something about acquiring it. And all this without any degree of mindfulness interposing; you've just been carried away. Do you see what I mean?

So mindfulness, guarding the gates of the senses, prevents you from just being carried away by all the impressions that you are subjected to through the senses. Mindfulness has to interpose and start checking these impressions, which means you just have to be mindful all the time. So this comes first. Otherwise your existence is purely instinctive and reactive; you're just following after impressions, giving way to impressions, allowing yourself to be carried away by them without stopping and checking, 'Well, is this particular impression positive or is it negative? Is it skilful or is it unskilful? Is it having a helpful effect on me or not?'

Duncan: Does this mindfulness become an instinctive ...?

S: Well, instinctive would be the wrong term, but it can become, as it were - though again this is the wrong term - habitual. You can sort of practise in such a way that you don't lose your mindfulness: you're always aware. You always exercise that sort of screening influence. Not that you sort of consciously and deliberately do it, but your mind just sort of goes off certain things after a while; you just don't bother about them any more. You don't have to think not to be carried away by them, you're just not carried away by them, because you've definitely lost interest in things of that sort. I mean for instance at one time you might have been very interested in motors cars, but after a while maybe you lose that interest. So even if you see ads [107] for motorcars, and all the latest designs and that sort of thing, you're just not influenced any more, not interested, whereas a few years ago you might have been interested and quite carried away by some model and all that sort of thing. Do you see what I mean? And this can apply to all sorts of things.

But the basic point here is the introduction of mindfulness into one's whole life so that you're no longer leading a purely instinctual, unreflecting sort of life. Socrates said, for instance - I think I quoted this last time: 'An unexamined life is not worth living.' But how do you start examining your life? You start looking at it, you start looking at the way you are living, the way you are reacting to experiences. Which means you start looking at the things which are affecting you, and try to sort out whether the overall effect is positive or not.

But of course the point that arises here is, is it, so to speak, humanly possible always to screen out the undesirable influences? Or whether one doesn't have to, at least from time to time, remove oneself to a situation where the undesirable influences are not present. Do you see what I mean? This is one of the reasons why we go on retreat, or one of the reasons why we, say, go and live in the country for a while. I mean it's just to exclude those harmful impressions, which for the time being we are not capable of coping with. No doubt when you are a great Bodhisattva you can function in the midst of hell, not to speak of this world, but that time has not yet come. So you need to exclude certain things which you know are going to produce a certain definite effect on your mind without your being able to help it.

Ratnaketu: It uses up a lot of energy too. I noticed ...

S: Yes. A lot of energy goes into just resisting and counteracting.

Ratnaketu: Yes, I noticed that with just the noise around here. You're continually holding it at bay. It takes a lot of energy.

S: Yes.

Paul: Another one is trying not to go to the West End too much. I find that is really hard. I was working at Vajraloka and when I came down to London for a break I went to the West End with Duncan. It was just like being under siege. It wasn't just like stimulation, it was painful ...

S: Umm, yes. But on the other hand whenever one comes to Sukhavati what one can be sure of finding in the common room a copy of Time Out there. And what is the message of Time Out? 'Come to the West End! Come to the West End! Come to the West End! [108] And have a good time! And have a good time!' (laughter) It's quite interesting isn't it. Maybe they, the members of the community, are just testing themselves!

Ruciraketu: The Newsletter can be very distracting sometimes. (laughter) It takes us away from our purposes! (laughter)

S: With visions of India and things like that. Yes.

David: But if you are going to live in the city I suppose you should try and get the good things from it, if you see what I mean.

S: When you say 'good things' what do you mean?

David: Well, I mean, well there must be positive aspects to living somewhere like London. It's, perhaps there's... (laughter) I mean, things like culture, going to concerts and that - which are available to you, so it's trying to do those things without getting distracted by all the other things there.

Paul: Mind you, even that I find too much. When I lived in Glasgow it was easier because it's a small city - it's only about a ?minute size of London - and there's a concert, it was kind of like everyone knew. It was sort of, it was an event! In London there's so much on.... Like a good meal, and that meal every day.

S: It's rather the same in the case of Norwich because concerts come on there only occasionally and they are definite events. Like you make a definite decision to go. You don't just sort of think, 'Ah well, what shall we go to this evening? Okay, go to a concert.' In Norwich you have to book two weeks ahead and make a definite plan.

Ruciraketu: It's interesting, though, that the order of events in a sense is first mindfulness, and then discrimination. So that you know what it is you are blocking and what you're guarding against, for instance.

S: Well, you know, you can't discriminate unless you are mindful of what it is you have to discriminate. You have to direct your attention to that area first and see what is happening, what are the factors involved.

But coming back a minute to this question of going to concerts and all that, I think one quite negative feature in a place like London is this danger of a sort of [109] cultural consumerism. Do you know what I mean? That everything is laid on, everything is provided. You just go along and you just sit back and enjoy it. You're just a consumer. If it was getting together, for instance, to produce music - well, that might be another matter. But I think even with regard

to good music, even with regard to classical music which can be very uplifting, I think one has to be careful that it isn't just an extension of one's general consumer mentality. Do you see what I'm getting at?

David: Yes. I had an experience yesterday. I was in a record shop. That really hit me, all the great masterpieces, and there's just racks of them, you know, an infinite number of performances of the Brandenburg Concerto. It really brings that up to you.

S: Right, formerly you had to make an effort to go and hear these sorts of things. They were very, very rare. Weren't easily available. I've been reading for instance about concerts in the last century when they weren't all that common, even in London. People would go, but beforehand they'd read up about the composer, they'd read about the life of the composer, they'd study carefully that particular piece of music; they might even try playing some of the themes over on the piano, to familiarize themselves with them. And only after that sort of preparation, then they'd go along to the concert. Appreciating it, presumably, very, very much more.

But, in a way, this particular paragraph is sort of dealing with this consumer mentality. Because the attitude of the ordinary, let's say unspiritual, person or person who hasn't yet started thinking in terms of being an individual is just to sort of consume whatever is put in front of him, without any sort of discrimination, without thinking, 'Well, what is going to help me in development, in that development? What is going to hinder me?' And then the question of discrimination arises. And in order to be able to discriminate you have to be able to exercise mindfulness, so the question of mindfulness arises. So once again we see that mindfulness is the growing point of the higher evolution as I've called it.

Ruciraketu: Although your consumer will discriminate between a flashy car and a, you know, useless car. So he probably would even see the value of discrimination when explained to him. You find that in talking to beginners. Just to point out, well, the value even for a consumer of extra awareness, if you can consume better products.

S: Right, well, 'intelligent consumerism', yes.[110]

David: Yes. That shows that the seeds of discrimination are in all of us, because that's why there has to be advertisers and those things to work against that.

S: Right.

Ruciraketu: I suppose that kind of discrimination, though, isn't... in terms of skilful and unskilful. It's more in terms of, you know, which is going to satisfy his craving more or less. (S: Yes) So although it's discrimination, it's not skilful discrimination.

S: Yes. Discrimination here is definitely between the skilful and the unskilful, and 'skilful' meaning that which is going to, you know, conduce more to your development as an individual.

So, 'How is the bhikkhu guarded in the doors of his senses? Having perceived a form with his eye, he is not led away by outward appearance or attributes.' 'Outward appearance' means a sort of general appearance, the general impression of the thing. It has to do with certain

specific features. 'As long as he lived with his faculty of sight unrestrained, he experienced the resulting covetousness,' that is to say, craving - 'grief and evil things. Entered on a path of self-restraint, he protects his faculty of sight and controls it.' That is, protects it with mindfulness. 'So with his hearing, smelling, tasting, touching. So with things of the mind; having perceived them he is not misled by their first appearance or seeming nature.'

This is quite important also. I mean things which are impinging on the mind. I mean, what sort of things do you think the Buddha has in mind here, or what sort of things might impinge on the mind nowadays? I mean it's not just things impinging on the mind through the five physical senses, it's more things impinging on the mind directly, without coming through the doors of the senses. So what sort of things, do you think, are included here?

Ratnaketu: It could be even things just like pop songs, or advertisement jingles, running over in your mind.

S: Yes, yes, Or even things coming from your reading: thoughts, ideas... I mean, left over bits of conversations, dreams. All these things are just impinging on the mind. So here, also, one has to exercise some discrimination. You might, for instance, get a bright idea of your own, but not (unclear) to he carried away by it, just because this is a bright idea, just because it's your own, and [111] start at once trying to carry it out. You have to, as it were, exercise restraint here. You have to examine it - 'Well it seems a bright idea, but is it a good idea; is it going to be useful; is it going to be helpful?' - before you really allow admission to it. Otherwise, with quite a few people, they get some bright idea - at once they want to carry it out, without thinking very much about it. It seems self-convincing, self-validating.

Sometimes you may just find yourself in a mood. A mood just gets entry into your mind, so to speak, for no apparent reason. It might be a slightly negative mood. So then you have to ask yourself, 'Well, what sort of mood is this? Should I allow myself to be in this mood? Should I not try to get out of it?' Don't just accept, 'Well, I suppose I'm in that sort of mood today and there's not much I can do about it!'

Ratnaketu: It's a hard thing to do that, to change moods.

S: Well, moods usually, you know, are quite sort of deeply rooted, aren't they. They're sort of expressions of your general emotional state.

Paul: Well, you find if you are aware of your mood, you - it doesn't affect you so badly, if you're just... you know you're in a downer. Actual awareness, you feel, is quite blurry. So you find you don't react so much to that...

S: Yes. But you shouldn't just abandon yourself to it, with the idea you can't do very much about it.

David: How does spontaneity tie in with what you've just said? Could you explain?

S: Well, spontaneity doesn't enter into it at all. I mean, people like to think of themselves as spontaneous, but they're usually being just reactive. I mean you see, you know, a beautiful cream bun in front of you - you grab at it! (laughter). I mean, that's not spontaneity, yes? So, you know, when one speaks of, well, being more mindful and thinking, well, whether you

should grab at it or not, this does not represent an inhibition of your spontaneity. No, this re ... a checking of your reactivity. I mean, a lot of people like to think of themselves as being very spontaneous, but they're not. I mean spontaneity is only possible, you know, with the creative [112] mind - not with the reactive mind. So these two things it's important to distinguish. Reactivity is not creativity, and reactivity is not spontaneity, also. So don't think that people are normally spontaneous - they're not. They're normally just reactive. Spontaneity is an achievement, which comes after quite along course of spiritual training!

David: It would be akin to inspiration, I suppose.

S: Yes, one could say that.

David: ... of that level.

S: I mean, once again, you see, it's a question of discriminating between different usages of the same term, because when we move on, say, into the spiritual life he have to carry with us our old terms. Well even 'individual', even 'positive'. So similarly with 'spontaneous'. We usually think of someone as spontaneous who is sort of lively and bright and jumping all over the place, but that isn't real spontaneity. It's a more refined form of reactivity. True spontaneity is, you know, something, well, as you said, more of the nature of inspiration, but we don't have a separate word for that sort of spontaneity.

Ruciraketu: I was even thinking, this week, about how usually when we talk about reactivity we're talking about - usually it comes up in, when somebody disagrees with us, or something, quite sort of vigorously, then they're being reactive and we've almost begun to associate reactivity with a certain amount of emotional sort of negativity or sort of violence, but it equally is just a sort of dull, placid sort - even quite peaceful, almost, except ...

S: Oh yes, yes. Complacent, sort...

Ruciraketu: Complacent.

S: Yes, yes, indeed! In fact, it's much more often, you know, like that. Much more often of that kind - and just plodding along, dully and vaguely, like a tortoise that's lost its way! (laughter) Not even a tortoise that is heading for the goal, slowly and steadily, yes? Just a tortoise that's lost its way and a tortoise that's lost its way is a tortoise indeed! (laughter) There's nothing more dreadful than a tortoise that's going round and round in circles, you know. [113] A hare, even if he's going round and round in circles, can always make up for lost time! (laughter) A tortoise has to be really sure that he's on the right path! That's why, I mean, a tortoise who's, you know, going round and round in circles is in a really terrible predicament - a tortoise who's lost his way.

I mean, another source of mental impressions, is say, reading matter - newspapers. I mean, I think we have to be quite careful about these things. That's why, you know, when we go to Tuscany, we don't have any newspapers, or radio, or anything like that. We try to screen out all those, you know, undesirable impressions. It does make a difference, you know.

Ratnaketu: I was thinking just recently how difficult it must be for people - just ordinary people - when they just sort of look at people that go off to Tuscany and don't read any

newspapers or listen to the radio, because I remember when I was young I came across some people who were from the Brethren Church, who'd never had any radio or TV and never read the newspapers, and I thought, you know, I just thought that was really weird.

S: Well, I can assure you we got on without it very well. For instance, I remember one day Vessantara came back from the town, and he'd just seen in passing, you know, an English newspaper - he'd just seen the heading - and there was some item of news, apparently something important that happened back here in England - Mrs Thatcher had sit (?) down, or said something. So, you know, Vessantara, being after all the organizer, he couldn't help being a little exposed to these things sometimes. So when he got back to Il Convento, I was the first person he saw. So he said, 'Oh! I just happened to see a newspaper headline. Do you want to hear the news?' I said, 'No!' (laughter). So I didn't hear. I don't know what it was. But when we got back you know, nothing of world-shaking importance had occurred, you know. I didn't feel that we'd missed anything, you know. But it's really very, very pleasant not having these sort of things impinging on one's consciousness all the time.

One's sort of consciousness is hyper-stimulated in modern times. Don't forget in earlier days it wasn't like this. In Ancient Greece it wasn't like this, in the medieval times it wasn't like this, even in the eighteenth century it wasn't like this. We didn't know - there were no, well, no newspapers, no radios, you know, very little of what [114] was going on. So in some ways that was a blessing. You might just very vaguely hear that there was some trouble in some country, you might not hear till ten, fifteen years later. Or you might vaguely hear, well, there'd been a change of government in the - in your own country, there'd been some sort of revolution, there was a new king. You'd just hear vaguely about it, yes? Maybe after some months someone would come to your village and you'd learn, well, there - yes! - there was a new king, or the old king was gone. No one seemed to know what had happened. Some people said he'd been killed, others said he'd died, but no one seemed really sure but, anyway, there seems to be a new king. Which meant that somebody else was collecting - you had to pay the taxes, you know, to somebody else. But you just didn't know very much of what was going on. Do you see what I mean? Certainly not what was going on in foreign countries. But now it's pouring in on us, you know, from all over the world. So in some ways that is good. It does expand our consciousness of, you know, the whole ... the human race as a sort of unit, interacting. But on the other hand there's an awful amount of distraction, and that isn't good. So I think nowadays, more than ever, we need to screen out these mental impressions and not just allow everything to come pouring in. I mean there are people who have the radio on, people who have the TV on, all the time. That must be really dreadful.

Paul: I've been noticing lately like you get papers like the Sun and that, and they do - they just work on reactivity. Like I find the better papers - they're a bit more objective, but I've been really noticing lately, how, just how they're really unskilful in how they actually operate, like in the way they lay out the headlines and (unclear)... with photographs. It's just there for instant stimulation.

S: Well, their intention is you should grab, you know, as soon as you see the headline, you should want to buy the paper, yes? So, I mean, this points to the fact that whatever the Buddha is saying in this particular paragraph, about guarding the gates of the senses, is more and more applicable now - much more so even than it was in the Buddha's day. It's very, very interesting - that you don't allow all these impressions in indiscriminately, you screen out as many of the unskilful ones as you possibly can. When I say unskilful, it's not that the

impressions in themselves are unskilful, but that they are almost inevitably going to produce, in you, unskilful mental states - of craving, hatred, delusion, and so on. So guarding the gates of the senses, guarding the doors of the senses, [115] becomes, you know, more and more important.

And therefore, the Buddha says, 'The bhikkhu, complete in this excellent restraint of his faculties, experiences within himself an unimpaired ease.' 'Unimpaired' means - what shall I say - what's an easier word than unimpaired - unspoiled, ease, happiness, sukha.

Paul: It'd be a bit like a calm ease, as well which is kind of some it isn't stimulated.

S: Sometimes it can be a very pleasant experience not to be stimulated. You feel this when you go into the country and it's very quiet and very peaceful. All you've got, you know, is just the - well, just purely natural things, which in a way are quite basic things. No traffic, no human beings, no voices, no artificial sounds or noises. It's as though a great load, you know, was gradually being lifted off you. It's this load of impressions, yes? And sometimes it happens that in order not to be, you know, affected by it all you have to shut yourself off. And that isn't really a good thing to have to do. When you get back into the country you feel, well, now you can afford to open up a bit. You feel yourself sort of relaxing or unwinding.

So, 'The bhikkhu, complete in this excellent restraint of his faculties, experiences within himself an unimpaired ease.' An unimpaired happiness. I mean most people would think that if you were constantly exercising mindfulness - checking yourself in this way - well that would be a source of trouble, and even suffering; but it isn't really like that at all. You might feel much more together, you know, when you're allowing in, so to speak, only those impressions which are going to affect you in a positive, skilful kind of way.

Paul: Certainly if it's willed it would have a negative effect. (S: Hm?) Only if it's willed. I find... not to be affected by like what's going on, it's kind of like battening down the hatches.

S: Well unfortunately you almost do have to do that, in some situations. So this is why it's good, you know, to be away sometimes, in situations where you can be quite open, without any, you know, harm or danger to yourself. All right, go on to 65, the next step.[116]

Ruciraketu: 'How, Maharaja, is the bhikkhu mindful and aware? The bhikkhu, in stepping forward or aside, does so with awareness of his action; in looking forward or looking backward he is aware of doing so. If he bends his arm or stretches it out he is aware that he does so; folding his robe or holding his bowl he is aware that he does so. Eating, drinking, masticating, swallowing, obeying the calls of nature, he is aware that he does so; walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking, keeping silence, he is aware that he does So. Thus is the bhikkhu mindful and aware.'

S: So you have to be mindful in order to discriminate between impressions. But what is mindfulness? This is the question that is dealt with here. How do you practise mindfulness? Well what the Buddha in effect is saying is that, well, you just have to be mindful all the time, mindful and aware whatever you are doing. You can't afford not to be aware, in any situation, in any respect, whatever you are doing. But what is this 'mindfulness and awareness'? Is it thinking, or is it just watching, just seeing? How does it differ from self-consciousness in the ordinary sense of the term? I mean, are you aware of the distinction? I mean, can you sort of

think back and recognize, 'Well, at such and such a time, when I was doing so and so, I was aware?' What does one mean by being aware or not being aware? Say when you are walking, are you aware that you are walking? What does the Buddha mean by, say, being aware when you are walking 'mindful and aware'?

Duncan: Well, that your mind is on what you're doing and not on what you were doing or what you are going to do?

S: Yes it certainly includes that. You're actually sort of present.[117]

Duncan: Yes.

S: Because presumably you can't exercise discrimination unless you really know what is going on, know what is happening, know what you are doing. But supposing say you are talking to somebody while you are having breakfast. Well are you fully aware then of the actual process of eating? Can you be aware of several things at the same time?

A vice: No.

Paul: It's impossible.

S: Impossible.

Paul: I think you were saying about business working lunches.

S: Yes.

Paul: I find myself that I can't - it's very hard to - you either concentrate on what the other person is saying or your eating. You can only do one or the other.

S: Yes. Well, like listening to music as a background but, according to me, that is terrible, especially if it's good music. Yes! If it's good music you should give all your mind to it, otherwise you can't appreciate it properly.

Paul: Yes. I find I'm quite aware of people who actually work with [118] music because I can't do that. You see, if it's either good music I tend to stop and listen to it, or if it's bad music I just want to turn it off. It's irritating.

Ratnaketu: I find that I can sort of divide my awareness - like doing a number of things at once, but it's not giving my full awareness to anything or anyone. You can't give your full awareness to a number of things, but you can divide your awareness.

S: Yes. Well, sometimes that is necessary and is quite justifiable, but it's not a bad thing, at least from time to time, just as a practice, to give your awareness to just one thing. Like on retreat, say, have some silent meals, so that you're simply aware of what you're doing - namely having your breakfast, or having your lunch - that can be quite good.

Duncan: How do you divide the awareness then? Is it that you are aware of one thing at one moment and then a split second after ...?

S: No, I don't think you can really divide your awareness. I think that when your awareness is quite intense you can include a number of things in that. Awareness doesn't mean sort of directing your attention to this and then to that, it doesn't really mean breaking up the awareness. I think this is quite an important point. If the awareness is too much broken up, then it becomes alienated awareness. Do you see what I mean? This is an important point because, for instance, the Buddha says here, 'If he bends his arm or stretches it out he is aware that he does so.' So there are two ways of looking at this. For instance, supposing now my arm is as it is, and I think, 'Well now I am going to [119] raise my arm.' All right I raise it. And I think, 'Well now I have raised my arm, now I am going to lower it.' Well, that is breaking up the awareness because we don't usually move like that. I mean the movement is continuous. So the awareness should go along with the movement, it should be continuous. You see you shouldn't be sort of breaking up the movement in order that you can be aware of it because that means breaking up the awareness, interrupting the continuity of the awareness. And this is what happens with so-called vipassana meditation, in some cases with some teachers. You practise breaking up the movement, which involves breaking up the awareness, interrupting the awareness, and this can have quite an unpleasant, quite harmful, effect. Do you see the difference? I mean you can certainly become more mindful, you know, by breaking up the action into bits and following that with your awareness which then also becomes broken up into bits, but then that does increase the sense of alienation, and that can have unpleasant consequences if carried to extremes. So you must cultivate being quite free, quite continuous, in your movements, you know, quite flexible. At the same time keep up the flow of awareness along with that and not separate from that. Do you see what I mean? The example I sometimes give you is that of someone who is playing a musical instrument. Suppose he is a very good player and he's thoroughly absorbed in the playing? So he's absolutely aware of what he's doing, he's aware of the music, he's aware of his own action in playing, but it's all come together. His awareness does not stand separate outside what he is actually doing looking at it, as it were, from the outside. So all of our activities should be like that. The awareness should be there all the time, but not a sort of alienated, spectator-like awareness, standing back from the action and looking at it, so to speak, from the outside. Do you see the point of the distinction? It's as though everything you do is [120] imbued with awareness. Not that here you are doing it (hand gestures) and here you are looking at what you are doing. So when everything comes together - well, depending on, I think, the depth of the awareness or the clarity of the awareness you can be, so to speak, aware of a number of things at the same time. But you're not aware of them as separate things, therefore they don't require separate acts of attention. Just as the person, say, who is playing a violin, he isn't, well, giving a bit of attention to the music, a bit of attention to the instrument. It's all one, so to speak. Do you see what I mean? It's like that when you're talking to someone, you're communicating with someone and you get very much into what you are saying. I don't mean in the sense of being carried away in the ordinary sense, but you're completely at one with what you're saying, because you're saying it with your whole heart. At the same time you're completely aware of yourself saying it, but not, as it were, from the outside. The saying is imbued with this quality of awareness - you're aware of the person to whom you're speaking. But again it's all one whole, and you're giving your attention to that whole, not to each of the parts separately. So literally your awareness is not that divided, not really. Do you see the point?

Daren: Subhuti was mentioning two things: he mentioned a kind of, almost a spatial awareness, or just a sort of self-awareness, or an awareness of objects around you, just a sort of sensual awareness, just on that level; and then there was a kind of awareness of purpose

which almost had a quality of time to it, perhaps.

S: Well, the spatial awareness is more like the awareness of purpose as it's called - is more like awareness of 'why you are doing it'. Do you see what I mean? I mean, supposing you're walking down the road, well you are completely aware of the fact of your walking, you're aware [121] in an integrated sort of way but you don't know - I mean, that is good so far - but supposing the purpose of walking was to do something unskilful. Do you see what I mean? Well then the mindfulness, or the awareness, would not really be complete, you wouldn't allow that unskilful purpose to be present. So you have to be not only aware of what you're doing but why you're doing that particular thing, that particular action, for the whole thing to be definitely skilful. So you have to take into account not only what you are doing but why you are doing it. It's not enough to be aware of what you are doing, you've got to be aware of why you are doing it, because then if you become conscious that the purpose is unskilful, well, then you have to change the action.

Ratnaketu: Yes, because then you can get into this thing of - I think there's a thing of 'aesthetic appreciation' devoid of morality or anything like that, and you can become aesthetically aware - things start to look beautiful - you know, you can see things in a beautiful aura which are actually unskilful. I remember once I'd had this sort of strange experience and I started seeing things as beautiful which - well I thought that everything must be beautiful; that even if somebody got killed by a car accident or something there would be something beautiful in it, and you just sort of ...

S: The blood on the road would make a beautiful pattern ...yes

Ratnaketu: The blood on the road and the sunlight glistening on it and things like that. And it's really devoid of awareness and the true emotion and all that sort of thing.

Paul: Another bit is the other side of that. I've been finding that [122] you've got to find beauty in your local environment. If you - I find this with myself - if I can't find anything beautiful, anything that I can relate to, that stimulates me enough in a positive way, you can't really function. (unclear) Even in Bethnal Green you've got this in Victoria Park: you get so many (unclear), you get a nice tree-lined square. They are - you've got to find beauty in your local environment.

S: Well, what does one mean by beauty in that sense? Do you mean nature?

Paul: Yes. You used to get your little tree-lined squares and you used to have nice little houses around. It's a sense of - it's just nice, it's actually nice. Like all down Roman Road those horrible tower blocks all you're doing is just using kind of tunnel vision. You don't want to see it. I used to walk through Stepney churchyard where it's lovely - full of really big trees, it's like being out in the country. It's really refreshing actually to go through it. You felt you didn't feel like you'd been over-stimulated, but it was just like fresh air, breathing fresh air for a couple of minutes.

Ratnaketu: I think what happens is that people today - the Japanese had it with their beautiful samurais: they could just slice somebody's head off, and it could be or they could make it ...

S: ... really artistic.

Ratnaketu: ... incorporate that into Buddhism somehow and make it beautiful.

S: Yes. They were concerned with what they were doing and not why they were doing it.[123]

Ratnaketu: Yes. And so today they're a bit - well artists and people like that I feel can look at tower blocks now and somehow see them as beautiful.

S: You see the sunlight gleaming on them and all that.

Ratnaketu: Yes. And they can say, walk through Soho and see some sort of poetic beauty in all the pornography shops which really isn't there.

Paul: That's really alienated awareness. You can get a thing like the kind of paintings that - it feels weird, it's kind of weird view to it.

S: Yes, it's the beauty of disease.

Ruciraketu: This temporal awareness really seems like that if it's taken to its conclusion you'd end up with conditionality, like that in dependence upon this is...(unclear) which is really very interesting to see it like that. That the way of just taking the purpose or awareness and trying to look at the purpose of things brings you straight back into conditionality.

S: Well, yes. Well (laughs) some people have said to me during these last few months even that a point has come in their life, say in the FWBO or in a co-op, when they've suddenly realized, 'Well, here I am packing beans - but why am I doing it?' (laughter) In other words, they say they have got so absorbed in this particular case in packing beans, or whatever it was, that they lost sight of the purpose, why they were there and why they were doing it, so they had to recall that to see its connection. Sometimes you just lose the connection. You get so absorbed in what you are doing you forget that you are really doing it [124] for a purpose. So you have to recall that purpose.

Daren: In fact it's almost as if most people have never become aware of why ...

S: No. Not any overall sort of general human purpose; they just respond or react to situations or factors as they arise. They're not aware of any overall purpose.

Daren: In fact the actual fact that there is a purpose to things is not something which in our society is a prevalent thing. You don't feel that there's actually a purpose to anything.

S: Well most people I think if they were asked would say, 'Well, what is the purpose of life? The purpose of life is, well, you're just born, and you grow up, and you get married, and you have children, and - you know - they also grow up and get married and have children. Well that is the purpose; that's life; the purpose of human life is just, you know, to carry on human life.' They don't look any further than that. In other words, they see it just in terms of perpetuation of the process of the lower evolution. But that isn't a real purpose one might say.

Ruciraketu: Isn't there a modern sort of philosophy like that history is the most important aspect of mankind - you know, the fact that he can have an awareness of history?

S: Yes. That's awareness of humanity as such, and the way in which it's changed through the ages. But even that doesn't usually go very far because it's collective and very often it thinks in terms of progress in a quite narrow superficial sense, not in terms of, you know, the [125] actual spiritual development of individual human beings.

So this awareness of purpose is very, very important from a spiritual point of view. So, you know, the Buddha is saying it's not just a question of being aware of what you are doing, but why you are doing it. In a sense, the 'why' is part of the 'what': you don't fully understand what you are doing unless you understand also why you are doing it. You can't really separate the two any more than you can separate space from time - they're two aspects of the same thing. You know, even when you are studying, you are aware that you are studying. But you wouldn't really be aware that you are studying unless you were aware why you were studying. So you can't really separate being aware of what you are doing from being aware of why you are doing it. They're inseparable.

Ruciraketu: Although, probably, if we had more emphasis on 'why', things like guarding the gates of the senses, and so on would become a lot easier, because you'd have that sense of purpose, that you could just discriminate that much more easily. You'd know what was what.

S: Yes. But then to have a purpose also suggests a whole philosophy, the whole philosophy of the higher evolution, or the Dharma, yes?

David: You asked a question earlier about what was the difference between self-consciousness and awareness. Could you... like I know that we've been trying ...

Ruciraketu: Very mysterious.

S: Well, what is the difference? What is sort of self-consciousness in the ordinary sense? Let's try to establish that first. Suppose you say, 'Well, I couldn't give my talk very well, you know, in the study group the other evening, because I was feeling self-conscious.' Well what would you mean by that? What is that sort of self-consciousness? Well, approach it in another way. Do you feel self-conscious when you're on your own?

Ratnaketu: Which 'self-conscious' are you using here?

S: Well, it's the ordinary, common or garden kind of self-consciousness. Do you feel self-conscious when you are on your own?[126]

Ruciraketu: No.

S: You don't, yes.

David: I was going to say I think I did for a while, but maybe that ...(laughter)

S: Well, maybe we'll deal with that separately (laughter).

Ratnaketu: Special case!

S: Special case! (laughter)

David: That was my problem.

S: But, anyway, usually people don't feel self-conscious when they're on their own. So when do you feel self-conscious, therefore?

Ratnaketu: When you are in front of other people. When you're with...

S: When you're in front of other people. So what is happening then?

Paul: Seems to me it's a reaction.

S: It's a reaction, but what sort of reaction?

Ratnaketu: You're becoming aware of your separateness from them, or...

S: Yes, not quite.

Paul: ...it could be how you come across.

S: Yes.

Paul: How... if you're making a good impression on them, or a bad impression, or something different.

S: Yes. Yes. You're conscious of how they are seeing you, and that sort of inhibits you, or it makes you feel awkward, because you are concerned with the impression that you make upon them, or that you will, or that you might, or that you could, make upon them. (pause) You're seeing yourself through their eyes to some extend, which means [127] you're not seeing yourself through your own eyes; which suggests sort of, lack of confidence, and all that sort of thing. In other words, your consciousness that they are conscious of you is stronger than your consciousness of yourself, yes? You're being, in a way, a bit overpowered, I mean by the fact that all these people are looking at you; it makes you self-conscious; if affects the way in which you behave. Your consciousness, your self, is not strong enough to withstand that. There's a sort of struggle, almost, between the way in which they see you and the way in which you see yourself, and this gives rise to self-consciousness and interferes with the way, perhaps, which you behave - either self-conscious laugh, or self-conscious giggle. So this is self-consciousness in the ordinary sense. But what about self-consciousness in the more, as it were, Buddhistic sense? (pause).

Well I have defined this in several talks. It's not just that you are aware of what you are doing; you are aware of yourself as doing it. So, in a sense, you are standing apart from yourself. So there's a possibility, if you're not careful, of alienation developing at that point. But, self-consciousness is awareness that you are aware. You have to check whether you are aware or not. So self-consciousness is awareness of being aware, whereas self-consciousness in the other sense is awareness of other peoples' awareness of you, you know, in such a way that it has an inhibiting effect on you. So this more positive kind of self-consciousness, you can, you know, practise it on your own; you can probably practise it best when you are on your own. You are not only aware, but you are aware that you are aware, and you are aware why you are aware. You are aware, you know, not only that you are aware, but why you are aware,

because you understand that awareness is, you know, the growing point of the higher evolution. That's why you want to develop awareness and awareness of being aware, because your purpose is to develop as a human being, as an individual.

Daren: Sometimes with this sort of inhibition, when you feel that, you know, you're aware of other people being aware of you, kind of makes you feel more inhibited. Sometimes it seems that that can have a positive sort of aspect to it, in the way of... I mean you get some people who try not to be... they try to do things - you know, they feel self-conscious about certain things, but they sort of try to do them anyway, but maybe they - the activities they're doing aren't actually skilful activities, and so maybe this sort of...[128]

S: Well, this is an aspect of what is called hiri-ottappa, you know, hiri-ottappa you must have studied in dealing with the positive mental events. 'Hiri' means a sort of shame, it's the consciousness that what you are doing is not approved by your spiritual friends. So this is not self-consciousness in the ordinary psychological sense, but it is an awareness of other people's awareness of you and what you are doing; but it's positive in the sense that their awareness of you acts as a sort of check upon what you are doing. Maybe they are more skilled than you, more experienced, so if you feel, or if you pick up, they're not quite happy with what you are doing, well, that draws your attention to the fact that maybe what you are doing is not quite skilful, and that produces the positive emotion of hiri or shame.

Paul: They usually work from a basis of friendship.

S: Yes.

Paul: You feel - with that other one - you're just trying to make an impression, but if you - it's like if you have got a kalyana mitra is your spiritual friend, it's hard - it is a real friendship there it would be natural, it's hard to... like hurts. You've a real friend.

S: Yes. Oh, yes, and you sense that he's hurt because, you know, you've just done something which, you know, harms you, and he's just upset or concerned that you've done that and then you become aware, well, that's how he's feeling, yes, and then you just realize, well, you know, 'What I did wasn't really skilful, it was harming myself.' So the spiritual friend becomes a sort of mirror in which you can see yourself and what you are doing - more clearly, perhaps, than you can see it directly on some occasions. I mean, sometimes you do have the experience - you just hear that, well, someone has done something. You think, 'Oh, no! They just shouldn't have done that,' you know, whereas they themselves are quite unaware of that. I mean they've just done it and haven't thought too much about it, or they might have thought it was quite a good thing to do, but you can see that, no, it was not at all good. So you feel quite sad, or even quite upset, and you might communicate that, and then that person might, you know, come to see, 'Well yes, you know, it wasn't really such a good thing to do after all.'

That doesn't necessarily mean that one person is always sort of pointing out and the other person is always having been pointed out. You know, the situation can sometimes change, you know, one day it [129] may reverse, as it were, yes? Sometimes that person may see something that you do that isn't very skilful, and feel that.

So this paragraph emphasizes the importance of that constant mindfulness: that mindfulness must become an integral part of your life. It's not that you just carry on doing what you

normally do but you just watch it, you just watch yourself. It's not that; but every activity becomes imbued with mindfulness, and the fact that you are mindful means that the nature of the activity itself is gradually transformed, because there are certain things you can't do if you're mindful. You couldn't very easily get drunk mindfully.

Ratnaketu: You can try. (laughter)

S: It would be like trying to go to sleep mindfully, yes.

Ruciraketu: Although they have got mindfulness down here: even when he's sleeping he's mindful.

S: Hmm?

Ruciraketu: Well in this here: 'walking, standing, sitting, sleeping...'

S: Well can you be mindful when you are sleeping? Or does it mean, you know, you go to sleep mindfully or that you are mindful about, for instance, the amount of time you devote to sleep? Does it mean that you are actually mindful during the state of sleep itself?

Ruciraketu: I think you can try to bring a certain amount of awareness into your dreams, for example. I'm not sure about deep sleep but...

S: Yes? Well how would you do that?

Ratnaketu: Probably I did that, just by... well, I was reading a book about dreaming and just by thinking about that, one day or one night, I was dreaming - I just - I was cleaning this drain, and I just realized, 'Oh, I'm dreaming!' and so, I thought, 'Well what shall I do?' because, you know, I could do anything. So I sat down to meditate. And then I became really aware of this pressure on the back of my head and on my back, pushing me. (S: Oh!) And then I became aware that what that pressure was that I was lying on my bed, with my back to the bed, and that although I was dreaming that I was sitting up, I was actually lying on my back. And so I was aware that I was asleep in bed and dreaming at the same time, and then ... but then I became - I thought, 'Well, I [130] don't want to become too aware or I'll just wake up. So I decided not to become too aware, and then I sort of lost my awareness and went back just to normal dreaming.

S: Had you been reading `The Thousand-Petalled Lotus'?

Ratnaketu: No.

S: Because I described about, in there, different methods of prolonging awareness and two - I just mentioned them. One is this determination: you sort of make a resolve before you go to sleep that you are going to remain aware. It may take some time before it, you know, has any effect. And you can also repeat a mantra before going to sleep. Also there's another method of compressing the glands here [points to his throat], with the fingers. But, yes, one can prolong awareness in that way, and sometimes if you are normally quite mindful you may find yourself becoming aware in the dream state, and you are aware that you're dreaming, and you can modify the dream accordingly.

So this means that the awareness sort of percolates down through the different levels of consciousness, so to speak, and you become as it were imbued with awareness. This is why sometimes it is said that, you know, of someone who is on the spiritual path, that he cannot do anything unskilful even in a dream, you see, because the awareness has penetrated into that state. So you're always in a sort of at least mildly aware state; a state of, you know, diffuse awareness, one might say; you're never completely unaware.

Ratnaketu: I was thinking the other day, can you only be aware of the present - you're only aware of the moment? Like I remember, I was looking at a photograph taken of myself a few years ago, which I hadn't seen until just recently. And I looked at the photograph - I could remember the incident, but I didn't feel anything for it, in a way. I didn't have any awareness of that now. I wasn't self-conscious of that event sort of happening, or anything like that. I wasn't aware of the past, other than remembering it, and I wasn't sort of living it, experiencing it. Once I had been aware of it, it had gone. And so it's like your awareness is just - you're just aware of just what's happening at each moment, in a way; not of the past or the future.

S: Well, even when you remember the past, that past which you remember, or the act of remembering, is part of the present. [131] But I remember, you know, when I was writing my memoirs recently, I remembered certain things of the past - you know, about which I was writing, and I was aware of how I was feeling at the time - naturally. But I was also aware, you know, remembering, of feelings of which I had not been fully aware at that time. (laughter) You see?

Ratnaketu: That's pretty good.

S: So that, of course, makes the writing of one's, you know, memoirs a little difficult because you have to distinguish between what you were aware of at the time and felt at the time, and what you became aware of in retrospect. So that, I mean, looking back you think, 'Ah, that's how I was really feeling at the time,' though I didn't recognize it at the time, or not fully recognize it. And in some cases this was things that happened nearly thirty years ago. Yes?

David: I find that with meditation. For me, one of the most valuable things is this - liberating me from my past, in a funny sort of way, in that there's a lot of things that have happened in my past, and through meditation I have become aware of why they happened, and such like, and it's a form of, sort of, you know, for me, liberation from those things.

S: Well, as understanding deepens you do begin to see a pattern, usually a pattern of reactivity: you see that you do the same things over and over again; you tend to make the same mistakes, in different situations, with different people. I mean sometimes this dawns upon people in connection with relationships. If they look back over a whole series of relationships, or even series of marriages, for instance, they might see that they're just repeating a single pattern, with different people, again and again. Then they have to ask themselves, 'Well, why do I repeat this pattern? What is the meaning of the pattern?' And gradually, perhaps, they can become free from that.

So all this is an aspect of awareness, awareness in depth. Anyway, perhaps we'd better go on. 66 - someone like to read that paragraph?

Duncan: 'How is the bhikkhu contented? He is contented with his robe and the alms he

collects in his bowl to protect and sustain his body. Just as a bird has its wings to bear it wherever it flies, so the bhikkhu takes his robe and bowl with him wherever he goes. Thus is he contented.'[132]

S: So here the Buddha is speaking of the bhikkhu and his bowl and robe. But what about the general principle? What is the general principle here? Is it just bhikkhu and bowl and robe? What is this principle of contentment? I mean, the bhikkhu is to be content with his bowl and robe but, I mean, if you're not a bhikkhu, say, well, what should you be content with, or what is the principle here?

Ruciraketu: Just be content with what you need.

S: With what you need - mm, yes.

Ratnaketu: Because you also have to say what you are going to do. Because I mean, the bhikkhu ... one person only needs a bowl and a robe, and that's all he needs. So you couldn't say, 'Well, I need a big car and a yacht,' and everything like that. But it's to do other things; it's to ... why do they need it?

S: Well, it's just a question of, then, being content with whatever you need for the sake of your development as a human being. This is what it really amounts to, because even the bhikkhu, actually, doesn't have just a robe and a bowl. He has, you know, several other things as well, even traditionally - you know, like a water-strainer, and, well, he needs a water-strainer because if he didn't strain his drinking water, well, impurities might get into it, and so on and so forth. And he needs a needle, you know, to keep his robe in repair. So just a few little things added on. Of course, over the centuries quite a few things get added on, but the principle is, well, you know, be content with what you just need. Don't go beyond that. And your need is determined, of course, by your general philosophy of life. Here, by a spiritual philosophy - by, you know, the philosophy of individual development; you could put it in more Bodhisattva-like terms and say, well, your needs are those things which are required for your personal development, and so that you can be of some use to other people.

Paul: Yes, simplifying your life... People in the west - they're so caught up in materials, in the material aspect, that they get like it's so complicated.

S: Well, you see, there are artificial needs; there are needs which are deliberately created by advertising agencies. I mean, they go all out to convince you, 'You need this! You need that!' so they [133] can sell that commodity; but it's not a genuine human need at all, not to speak of a spiritual need. But it has, you know, the label of a need, 'You need this. You need that. You need a new car every year,' or at least every two years.

David: It's not necessarily just material things as well, but people you think sometimes you need - a relationship, or you need a person. I think that's a sort of materialism there, put over into another psychological ways.

S: Right, or a culture.

David: Yes, yes, since...

S: Well, there is such a thing as an objective need, but you have to be very careful you don't disguise greeds as needs. You know, it's like what I was saying sometime before about when one says one has to do this, or has to do that, when actually you're choosing to do it. But you're not admitting the fact to yourself. So in the same way here you just want something, but you say it's a need - you say it's even a need for your spiritual development. Again - I think I was talking about this recently - everything is justified because, yes, you need it for the sake of your spiritual development. You need to go to Greece, or you need to get a bit drunk occasionally - it all helps in your spiritual development, so it's justified. In this way there is nothing that can't be justified; everything's a need; it all helps your spiritual development.

Ruciraketu: Again, it's interesting that to work out your needs, it comes back again to a sense of purpose.

S: Yes indeed, yes.

Ruciraketu: It seems always to be coming back to a sense of purpose because that way you can discriminate again, I suppose.

S: And also you need spiritual friends to really help you (if you need help) in deciding, well, whether what you think of as a need really does help you, you know, from a spiritual point of view; whether it really is helping you to go in a certain direction. (pause) You know, this is a slightly different question. Some people think so little of themselves that they don't give any importance to their [134] needs. They almost like to think they don't need anything. But one does have needs, as a human being, and of course, one has spiritual needs.

Paul: It's knowing your self-worth. Once you know your worth, you know what you need and what you don't need.

S: Right. Yes. What you need to function as a human being, and what you need in order to develop and grow even beyond that.

David: Yes. That's quite important. I think I'm into music because people have a tendency to impose on you, sometimes perhaps prevent you from meditating, and you have to be quite firm and realize there are things you need, and you just prevent that trespass.

S: Right. Yes. Well, again, it's a form of discrimination, and you have to be aware. You have to be aware of your purpose and your own genuine needs, and decide, you know, what it is you need more at any given time. Sometimes you may need to work; sometimes you may need the company of other people; sometimes you may need to talk and communicate; sometimes you may need to be quiet. So, I mean, you have to sort of monitor your own progress, as it were. I mean, not too minutely, but just in a general kind of way, so that at any given time you are getting, or you provide for yourself, what you actually need at that time. Sometimes you may need stimulation - sometimes you may need the opposite of stimulation.

But the principle here in this paragraph is being content, being happy, you know, with what you have - that is to say, you know, with what you have which is meeting your current need, and don't go beyond that.

Ruciraketu: This contentment is something which would come at integration, isn't it?

S: Yes. There's no conflict of interests. Very few people are really content but, you know, genuine contentment comes from the consciousness that you have everything that you really need; there's nothing that you need. You've got it all and it's all helping. (pause) You've got space, you've got time, you've got energy, maybe you've got youth. You've got a good mind, you've got opportunity to study, opportunity to meditate, you've got kalyana mitrata, you've got everything that you need - you don't need anything else. [135] So you are aware of that. You don't need to go to the cinema, you don't need to - well, waste time. So you're content, you've got everything that you need.

I think this was, you know, some people's predominant emotion in Tuscany last year. They felt really content - that they'd everything that they needed. I mean from a purely human point of view. Well, they had food, clothing, and shelter. They didn't have to bother about those things. Where they would - no they'd bothered before, you know, that was all dealt with - only Vessantara had to bother with the shopping. So everything was provided for, everything was laid on. Well, they'd laid it on for themselves by, you know, thinking ahead. So food, clothing, and shelter were all there. Weather was there - sunshine was there, blue skies were there; pleasing scenery, seclusion, quietness, and study, and, you know, meditation, physical exercise, communication - it was all there. What more did you need?

So I'm pretty certain that nobody actually felt drawn to the world outside during that time. I don't think anybody ever felt, 'Well, I'd really like to see a newspaper,' or 'I'd really like to know what was going on' - I don't think so. No one was waiting for the telephone to ring, no one was getting any letters - well, except Subhuti and myself, regretfully - so everyone was content. They had what they needed. They knew what they needed. They knew what they needed because they knew what they needed it for: you know, they had that awareness of purpose, they knew why they were there. Well, even if they didn't at the beginning, they knew by the end. (laughter) But, yes, there was this feeling, this atmosphere, of content. Some people felt so contented they would have been quite prepared to stay on for another three months.

Ruciraketu: Another three years.

S: Three years even, yes. It was quite interesting when we had the Tuscany reunion and I suggested we might, you know, have a refresher Tuscany - an actual cheer went up, you know. People must have been pretty content with the situation, and pretty convinced that it really did meet their genuine needs, their human need and their, so to speak, spiritual needs. There wasn't anything that you needed, I think, that wasn't there - really needed. It was all provided - well you provided it for yourselves. Even people who were devoted to classical music, they didn't miss it.

Paul: I was even finding that when I was working at Vajraloka, on the [136] building. There I was doing very hard work, but like the nearest cinema was twenty miles away, and the nearest pub was about eight miles away; the whole life was just based in the working environment. I might go out for walks.

S: Yes, but I think it does help when the nearest cinema is twenty miles away.

Paul: But it was funny, I could actually work harder. I mean, we were working, at times, six and a half days a week and you weren't feeling tired. I was really surprised. In London, if I

work more than five days a week, I really start feeling it; but there we could work six - even seven days a week, and without it catching up on you. You had the energy to put into the work.

David: If you think about that - what you've just said and what our real needs are - I mean, I was just thinking, virtually the whole of London would disappear and...

S: Certainly the West End would disappear - certainly Soho would disappear.

David: And newspapers would be empty, because, I mean, all of what we think of as news and current affairs and important events really almost are nothing.

S: Yes. Well, just a page of communiques would be quite enough, you know, just the sort of thing that comes off the telex. But you notice this - I mean I've noticed it on the radio, unfortunately, you know, supposing there's going to be some announcement, some important announcement, say in half an hour's time. Suppose at five o'clock the prime minister is going to make a statement. All right, at half past four they get people discussing what, and speculating what, she's going to say. (laughter) And this is stupid because, all right, wait half an hour and you'll know. But no, they've go to have this discussion, 'Well, suppose she says this and suppose she says that,' and 'No, I think she's going to say that.' And then five o'clock comes and you hear what she actually says; it might be something completely different. (laughter) But why not wait; it's all unnecessary, all this comment and speculation, yes?[137]

Daren: Well, there is a saying of Winston Churchill's that first you tell the people that you are going to tell them something, then you tell them, and then you tell them what you've told them.

S: Well, that's fair enough. That's the person who actually makes the statement - well, that's what I do - I do this all the time. I do it much more than that.

Daren: ...perhaps by saying something at four-thirty they were getting people kind of - their minds concentrated on what is actually going to be said.

Ratnaketu: No, but that - Winston Churchill said that he's - you tell them what you are going to tell them, and those people had thought that you don't know what Margaret Thatcher was going to tell them.

Daren: No. But they have an idea, and they get people (laughter) - get people thinking about the problem or the situation.

S: All right; no, I don't get that impression at all. No.

Daren: Perhaps it's - well...

S: No. I think stick to the facts where there are facts to stick to. But, I mean, like say half an hour before - you get it going on the whole day, sometimes, you know.

David: When I lived in America, I mean, you were so aware of that - their way of ... there isn't such a thing as 'present' any more in [138] America, because they're always anticipating the

future.

S: Ah, yes.

David: If only on television: you're watching a programme, but before it's over they're telling you what's going to be on next, and so on. It's just...

S: Well, you could say that the loss of the present is the essence of alienation.

David: Yes.

S: When you're - but this is also, you know, the antithesis of contentment, because if you're constantly preoccupied with the future it means you're not content with the present; there's no contentment. (pause) You're always concerned with what's on next week, if you're not content this week, not content today. Anyway, it is - oh! it's twenty to twelve; maybe we should have a coffee, because it is coffee-time, so let's... [coffee break]

S: Well, in - just to keep off the track just for a few more minutes. In my talk on 'A Case of Dysentery' I spoke about kindness, didn't I, yes? So in the same way one could say, well, kindness is quite rare in the world: you do get some sort of - yes, based on just ordinary human feeling, but you don't get all that much; and, you know, even within the spiritual community sometimes, you know, kindness isn't really very common - not as common as one might have expected, or had reason to expect, even - that's quite surprising. It's as though, you know, very often people are so much concerned with their own needs, you know (which means their own greeds and the satisfaction of them), they just haven't got time, almost, you know, to think of other people or to be kind to other people.

Ruciraketu: That's more true of, like, cosmopolitan places, though, isn't it? Because I'm always struck by how sort of, well, without getting sentimental, but, you know, rural people do tend to be more kinder, generally.

S: A bit more considerate - sometimes.

Ruciraketu: It's easy to romanticize, though.

S: Yes, yes.

Duncan: Well, it's also partly, perhaps, because of, of what you were saying earlier about when you're in the country, you sort of open up.

S: Yes, yes.

Duncan: Well, these people are not afraid of speaking to you, whereas in your - when you're in the underground, you're standing together.

S: Well, there's so many people you couldn't speak to them all.

Duncan: No, you, you aren't going to...

S: There's a joke I made somewhere, there's a true story, that, you know, there's some innocent foreigner came to Britain and he was told by one of his English friends who was a bit of a joker, that it was [140] the custom in England that on entering an underground railway compartment you shook hands with everybody in it (laughter). So he acted upon this for a while, or tried to. Anyway, the point of the joke presumably is that, you know, it's so contrary to what actually happens, or what could happen.

Duncan: Yes.

S: So, you know, shake everybody in the compartment by the hand on entering it. (laughter)

Ruciraketu: Go past your stop.

S: But in the country, you know, you just go for a walk, you just encounter one person, you just pass one person: well, of course, you know, you say 'good morning,' or whatever, even if you've never seen them before, but if you, you know, pass a hundred people, how can you, you know. I mean this is one of the features of, you know, life in the city - everything is so overwhelming that your senses and responses get blunted.

Ratnaketu: You also get used to other human beings. This - I remember, I was ...

S: Yes. You get used to ignoring other human beings.

Ratnaketu: I was on a solitary retreat once in Cornwall and I'd only been there for about four weeks without seeing anybody, and the farmer who came by - and I went out to sort of - because they'd changed the times around, and I wanted to find out because I was going to catch a bus back, and things like that; and I went out to talk to him, and I was so glad to see just another human being, that I just - all this warmth was just sort of pouring towards him, and he got, we both got really embarrassed (laughter), and he couldn't quite look at me, and I was beaming at him, and because I couldn't just, I couldn't hold it back. But in the city you just, you just really walk by and you just, it all becomes a bit meaningless.

S: Yes. They become ciphers, as it were.

Paul: That's one of the qualities that should be developed in communities.[141]

S: Hmm?

Paul: That kind of kindness, openness, and warmth, sort of, that you actually appreciate the other people in your community.

S: Yes. But it needs quite a bit of sort of hard work, I mean, it doesn't just happen; you really have to work on it quite consciously and deliberately. Otherwise you get cases of people, you know - I came to know one or two even recently, you know - sharing the same room even, for months, but they've hardly had a conversation, much less still really got to know each other. This can happen even in a community. So you need to make, you know - go out and make an actual effort, you know, to get to know people, spend more time with them, you know, communicate better with them. It doesn't just happen automatically because you're staying under the same roof. Well, it might happen automatically if you were all in a very healthy

positive state, but usually people aren't in that very healthy positive state, so they need to make a conscious effort to enter into communication, and even to be more aware of others, more concerned, and treat them more kindly. Sometimes I'm quite amazed at how unkindly people can treat one another, even within a community: it seems quite astonishing.

Ratnaketu: I think that happens quite a bit when what you're doing and your time becomes really important, and so that you haven't got time to sort of deal with all those other things that are just sort of getting in your road - these other people - and you've got things - that's why, I think, it's difficult in places like London where there are all these businesses and classes to run and money to make, and things like that, and you just get - you've got to do this.

S: Yes. You have to be very careful you don't get into a situation where you've no time for other people as people, and no time for communication.

Ruciraketu: Could you, you know, deliberately go into a situation like that for a period of time, do you think? You know, like you'd say, 'I know for a year or so I'm going to be involved in this particular business'?

S: Well sometimes you may consider that overall that is best - for you as well as for others, but you'd have to do it with your eyes wide open, [142] be careful that you don't start, you know, feeling resentment after a while.

David: It's a challenge that we, I think, particularly face in the building team, because our work - I think if we look back over the last few months, there's been times when we've started to go like that, but I think we have for whatever reason, perhaps just going on retreat, I think that retreat, when we went to stay with you, was quite important for that. We'd all been under a lot of pressure. And that's one of the things I find remarkable about working in this environment, is that that awareness, however small, is still there enough to bring us back, and if we can do that in this sort of situation, well it's really like you were saying last week, if you can meditate in the day, you know when you're feeling tired, it gives you a sort of strength - you know, you can do it when it's easy. So it's actually making us stronger.

S: Yes. Shows you what you can do when called to. Anyway, come on, let's push ourselves back to the text.

Daren: Not that one actually need - not that one should actually look for tough situations in which...

David: No, but as we're in one, we're there and we've got to do work, yes, but there's a good one about that too.

S: Well, tough situations present themselves anyway, sooner or later in the course of one's life; one certainly doesn't need to go looking for them. (laughter) Well, if there's nothing else, I mean, there's old age, disease, and death. I mean, these are quite existential situations which one will have to confront sooner or later. Anyway, lets go on to 67.

Ratnaketu: 'Equipped with this noble code of morality, with this excellent restraint of his faculties, this mindfulness and awareness, this contentment, he chooses a solitary resting-place - a forest, the foot of a tree, a rock, cleft in the hillside, cave, charnel house, the

depths of a wood, an unsheltered place in the open air, a heap of straw. On returning there from his collection of alms, his meal finished, he sits cross-legged, his body erect, his gaze directed in front of him, remaining mindful.'

S: This is the preparation for meditation. So it's [143] important that there is this preparation; you can't just sort of start meditating. This is something I used to emphasize very much in the old days, so to speak, when I was taking meditation classes, you know, at the old centre, that you can't just come straight off the street and sit down and start meditating; there has to be time for adjustment. You have to, as it were, go through these other stages. Here it says first of all you have to be practising morality, you have to be observing the precepts. Then practising restraint of the faculties, you know, guarding the doors of the senses, being mindful and aware, being content and then finding out a solitary resting place, that is to say, some suitable place for practising meditation, whatever it may be. And then you return there, in this case from 'collection of alms, his meal finished'. This means they're all the sort of affairs of the day, a bit sort of finished with, so that your mind is free, you've done everything that you had to do. It doesn't mean that he's sitting down to meditate immediately after his meal, I mean it means sometime after. Other texts make this clear: you've given time for digestion to take place and then you sit. But, you know, you've prepared the ground; that's half the battle. They used to insist upon this quite a lot; I don't know whether this is still insisted upon - it should be. Preparation is half the battle.

I mean, I do see sometimes, in communities - I suppose it's partly sort of circumstances - that, you know, sometimes people don't even sort of jump out of bed until the actual 7 o'clock bell rings, and, you know, they just dash along to the toilet and dash downstairs into the shrine, or upstairs as the case may be. Do you see what I mean? But this isn't really the best way of doing things. One does need a little time for, well, preparation, so to speak.

Ruciraketu: I found this week I was leading the meditation, which meant I was getting up, you know, before half six, and my meditations were a lot better. They were still distracted but ...

S: Well, first it gives you time to wake up properly, and maybe that's important in the case of some people - those who don't wake up sort of instantly, and a feeling of having enough time, yes? So this is what that paragraph was concerned with, just the importance of preparation. And having dealt with whatever practical matters you need to deal with, you shouldn't sort of still be having them on your mind when you sit to meditate. They should all be finished with. But I think this is why it's good to have one's main - [144] for those who are working a lot, I think it is good that they have their main meditation in the morning, you know, after they get up and before they've started the day's work, and before they've started thinking about it even, hopefully.

I mean I had a talk about this with Subhuti some time ago, some months ago, because he was very, very busy and he was getting a bit concerned that he wasn't keeping up quite as much meditation as he wanted to. So I said, well, the best thing to do is just get up early in the morning, and just sort of do the meditation, and have that, in a sense, over, before you begin the day's work, because if you've been very, very busy during the day, it's very difficult, really, to get into it in the evening, but at least if you've had a good night's rest, even though you've got a lot of work to do during the day, well, you know, just make the meditation first the thing that you do, while the mind is fresh and relatively bright, and, you know, that will stand you

in good stead during the day. So this is what he started doing. So I think this is important if you're very busy: you must make a point of having your main meditation in the morning. Even if you haven't got much to do during the day, or if you are at leisure, well, fair enough, you can sleep later, have a late breakfast, and maybe in the middle of the morning just quietly get into your meditation - that's good. And you can co-operate in that way quite successfully. But if you've got a full and busy day, you just mustn't put it off until the evening, you've got to get it in in the morning, yes, otherwise it means that you don't get it in at all probably. You must start the day in that way.

Paul: I found it was (unclear... courting the law?) if you meditate in the evening, it's to relax. I spent, like, then go and have a meal, and then you have a sit - look actually physically relaxed. You can wind yourself down and forget, like try and get things out of your mind, all the problems, get yourself into a quiet state of mind, then sit. I find it's very hard after a day's work.

S: Yes. If you're experienced in meditation, well that's another matter, but most people simply aren't as experienced as that, so the morning meditation does become very important. Anyway, right, 68.[145]

Daren: 'Having abandoned the covetousness of the world, he lives with his heart free of this, cleansing his mind of covetousness. Having abandoned ill will and anger he lives with mind free of these; compassionate to all living beings he cleanses his thought of anger and ill will. Having abandoned sloth and torpor he lives free of them; his perception alight, mindful and aware, he cleanses his thought of sloth and torpor. Having abandoned agitation and worry he lives unconsumed by these; inwardly calm he cleanses his mind of agitation and worry. Having abandoned doubt, he lives passed beyond uncertainty; as one who is not questioning what things are good, he cleanses his mind of doubt.'

S: So this paragraph deals with what is called the 'suppression of the five hindrances'. It is the five hindrances which are described here. So it's as though the Buddha is saying, well first of all you have to lay a good foundation; first of all you have to make sure you've gone through the preliminaries. You need to be equipped with morality, restraint of the senses, you need to be mindful and aware, content, then to find out a suitable place, to finish with all sorts of worldly business, then sit down to meditate, but even when you've done all that and you're actually sitting there, with your gaze directed in front of you, and still mindful, you still haven't finished even the preparation, but you come from a more, as it were, objective to a more subjective preparation. You need to suppress the five hindrances, and the point is made that... I mean the five hindrances won't be permanently eliminated until you've developed insight, real wisdom, but they have to be at least temporarily eliminated for it to be possible for you to enter upon the dhyana states. So you have to sort of check that in your mind there is no covetousness, no craving for worldly things. And if, even when you're sitting there meditating, you're thinking, for instance, about making money or, you know, you're thinking about going out somewhere, well that will prevent you, you know, getting into the dhyana states. So you have to be quite sure that there is no covetousness, no ill will, no sloth and torpor, no agitation and worry, and no doubt.

I've gone into these things on other occasions in detail, I think. But there is an interesting point in connection with doubt. 'Having abandoned doubt he lives having passed beyond uncertainty, as one who is not questioning what things are good, he cleanses his mind of

doubt.'[146]

He knows what things are good, he knows what things are skilful. In other words, he has a definite skilful purpose in life, and as a result of this he has no doubts. He has no doubt about what he is doing, he has no doubt about the value and benefits of the meditation itself. If he's got all sorts of doubts - 'Should I be meditating or not? Is this going to do me any good? Maybe the spiritual life itself is just a waste of time; maybe it's all just a delusion.' If he's got those sort of doubts, he won't get into the dhyana states. He's got to be quite convinced that what he's doing is worthwhile. So one can see there's in a way a lot of preparation: not only the more general preparation, but this more specific preparation of making sure that none of these five hindrances is present in the mind when you embark upon the meditation. So before you take up the mindfulness, or before you take up the metta bhavana, one should just check, you know, what is one's mental state. Are you still angry with someone and dwelling upon that? Have you got a particular craving? Is your mind very much on, you know, what you're going to have for supper, later on, or for breakfast? Or are you very disturbed and agitated? Or have you got doubts about the practice itself? You've got to deal with these things, and put them out of the way before you can really get on with the meditation. And of course tiredness - I suppose that comes under sloth and torpor - you have to be quite sure you're not feeling tired.

I think I've mentioned these things in other places, but there are certain specific measures you can take. If you feel more sloth and torpor and tiredness, well, you can make sure you sit with your eyes open, and there's plenty of light, because that is stimulating. On the other hand, if your mind is very agitated, well, it does help to meditate with less light, even in darkness.

It's quite unfortunate that, you know, very often we have to just fit in meditation, as it were, instead of get into it gradually and naturally, because you just feel like getting into it. Do you see what I mean? It should be a sort of natural state. You get this impression, I mean here's this bhikkhu - after all he's talking about bhikkhus, yes, and, you know, he's been doing all these different things, and he's living his life quietly, and he's found a nice tree to sit under, and he's gone to the village and he's collected some food, and he's come back and eaten it quietly and mindfully, and he's sat down for [147] a bit, he's digested the food and he's feeling very, you know, pleasant and calm, so, you know, he's just quite naturally sitting under the tree and he just goes into a meditative state. We shouldn't think too much of meditation as a sort of exercise that we do at certain times, even when we're not feeling like it. That in a way isn't very natural: in a way that isn't how it should be ideally.

Ideally, you know, meditation or a dhyana state is something you sort of slip into, almost, because conditions are right, and because conditions are right, and because you're ready, and because, you know, that's the natural trend, the natural tendency of your mind. So maybe, you know, you've had your meal, and you're just sitting there, maybe just in your chair, you're just sitting there, everything's calm and quiet, you've no particular desires or cravings, you're not annoyed with anybody, not thinking about anything in particular, so it should be that your mind quite naturally, you know, tends to a dhyana-like state. This is in a way how it should be. You shouldn't think of meditation as a sort of artificial practice that we do. Well it has to be like that for a while, but that's only because of our actual limitations and the bad sort of state we've got ourselves in. Do you see what I mean? Yes? In the same way we have to do the metta bhavana as a practice, but in a sense, again, this should be our natural state of mind; if we are happy and healthy ourselves, well, should we not wish well to others? We shouldn't

need an exercise to help us do it. So the fact that we need these exercises, including meditation as a specific practice, means, in a way, that something has already gone wrong.

I mention sometimes in this connection something that I think it was Herodotus said about the ancient Egyptians and the ancient Egyptian's view of the Greeks - that is the ancient Greeks - who weren't [148] ancient then. Anyway, the Greeks were very young sort of modern people that the peoples of the older civilizations rather looked down upon in some respects. And according to Herodotus, the Egyptians criticized the Greeks on account of their physical exercises. You know, the Greeks were very much into physical exercise and body building and all that kind of thing. The Egyptians said that this was all wrong. The Egyptians said that your ordinary, normal, everyday life should give you the exercise that you need, and result in your having a good physique. You shouldn't need special exercises or special places to do these things. If you look at ancient Egyptians' art you nearly always see that the ancient Egyptians were very fine physical specimens. Their whole way of life was designed to have that sort of effect. In the case of the Greeks, from the point of view of the ancient Egyptians, something had already gone wrong. In an ideal way of life you'd find yourself meditating as it were spontaneously on certain occasions, when you'd got a certain combination of circumstances. But eventually, ideally, this is what should happen, that you should, you know, develop such a way of life or be in such a mental state that you should be able to go into a meditative state just when there is a particular combination of circumstances. When you just find yourself maybe alone in a room or quiet or even with some other person, and nothing particularly to think about, in quite a positive emotional state, you know, you should naturally emerge in a sort of dhyana-like state. That should be what happens quite naturally. So one should think of meditation in those terms too, in that way too, not as something that you do on a certain occasion, when the bell rings, with a lot of effort and struggle - well, no doubt that is the way it has to be for the present, but that's not the ideal, one should remember that![149]

Ratnaketu: I was thinking along those lines, that it would be good one day to have a community or group of people just living out in the country somewhere, without a specific purpose at all to do, except to be Buddhists, and that's all - they're just Buddhists, and they're just like bhikkhus but they're all living together. And I remember Ruciraketu saying one day that he thought one of the problems with the FWBO is that it could be almost a bit too sort of conscious of itself as a Movement and having courses and exercises for people and things like that, and...

S: Well, of course, the majority of people do need these things but one mustn't forget these things are only a means to an end, and sooner or later you should reach a state where you don't need those things and you can function and be positive and creative and be growing without all these sort of fixed supports. I mean, the other day when I went out to the coast with Sthirananda, he was making a suggestion of this sort. He thought we ought to have sort of 'play retreats' combinations of play and study. He thought go away to the beach somewhere, some solitary place where we wouldn't be interrupted and just study as much as we felt like studying during the day, but in between just be swimming and, you know, playing in the sand and all that sort of thing - he thought this would be a very good combination: but I rather doubted whether people would be able to get well into study, I thought they might be a bit distracted. But he was quite sure he wouldn't be, that he would be able to get well into study under such conditions. Might try it some day. But that is something to be remembered in a way, isn't it? You know, that the spiritual life in the end should not be just a discipline

[150] or something you have to impose upon yourself, but a quite natural expression, a spontaneous expression, of the way you actually feel, the way you actually are. I mean as, say, with vegetarianism it's not that you've imposed upon yourself this rule or this discipline that 'thou shalt not eat meat,' or 'thou shalt not eat fish'! It's just the way you feel. You don't want to eat meat, you don't want to eat fish; you don't feel like doing those things just because of your general sensitivity to other forms of life. It's not that if the prohibition was removed or somebody wasn't looking, well at once, you know, go and have a good steak - it's not like that at all. So it's just the same with these other things. It's not that, well, if that bell wasn't ringing you wouldn't go and meditate. No, you know, because it depends upon something within you. So though all the classes and courses and all these things are good for the majority of people - they need them for quite a few years but we mustn't forget that they aren't ends in themselves, though you mustn't start telling yourself prematurely, if you see what I mean. Anyway, let's go on: 69.

David: 'It is as if a man, having contracted a debt, should engage in work and be successful in it, then should discharge the debt and perhaps have a surplus with which to maintain a wife. It would seem to him: 'Formerly I contracted a debt, engaged in work which was successful; I was enabled to discharge the debt, and there was a surplus with which I could maintain a wife.' Because of this he would be joyful and happy.'

S: Let's go right on, because they're - all these paragraphs are connected.[151]

David: 'It is just as if a man were bound in prison and after some time should be freed, with safety, without cost, and with no loss whatever of his property. Because of this he would be joyful and happy.

'It is just as if a servant or slave, a man not his own master but dependent on others, and not able to go about as he liked, should, after a time, be freed from his servitude, become his own master, and be able to go about as it suited him. Because of this he would be joyful and happy.

'It is just as if a wealthy owner of property should start out on a famine-stricken and dangerous desert way, and should, after a time, cross over that desert and reach safety and with peace the outskirts of a village. It would seem to him: 'Formerly I, a man of wealth and property, entered on a famine-stricken and dangerous desert way; now I have reached peace and freedom from danger.' Because of that he would be joyful and happy.

'In just the same way, the bhikkhu in whom the Five Hindrances are not destroyed sees in himself the states as of debt, sickness, imprisonment, slavery, and the desert path. Similarly, the bhikkhu in whom the Five Hindrances are destroyed sees in himself the states of freedom from debt, of health, of deliverance from prison, of freedom from slavery, and of being on safe ground.'[152]

S: So do you see the point of the comparison? I mean, the Buddha is speaking about getting rid, even temporarily, of these five hindrances and people usually regard these hindrances and, say, indulgence in these hindrances as, well, the aim and object of life, the meaning and purpose of life - satisfy your cravings and indulge your ill will, etc., etc., and be all agitated and worried; in a sense people like to be in this sort of state, they don't want to give up being in that sort of state. But in the case of, you know, the person who is entering upon the

dhyanas, I mean, he gets rid, at least temporarily, these hindrances, and then he feels very, very free, he feels liberated, he feels like someone who is freed from debt, who recovers from a serious illness, who is released from prison, released from slavery, and, you know, who has found the right path, after being on the wrong path. So he feels this getting rid of the five hindrances as a tremendous liberation and he feels very happy on that account.

I mean, quite a lot of people would say, you know, if you talked about getting rid of covetousness and ill will and all that, well, what would there be left in life, what enjoyment would there be. They don't think of these things as a burden or as a hindrance - they think of them very often as constituting the meaning and purpose of life, yes? and they just wonder how you can be so happy without these things. I mean this is something that we find when people, you know, from outside discover about the communities - they really wonder how you can be [153] happy, in this case without family life, and especially how you can be happy without a wife, without children, and without a regular job. Maybe they think about the job even more than any of the other things. How is it you can be so happy:? You haven't got a job, you haven't got a career, you haven't got much money, yes? You're just getting your expenses, and not very generously even then. They just can't understand how you can be happy. I mean, not that they're really happy even with all those things - but they really wonder how you can be happy without them. But this is, I think, one of the things that people gradually discover: that the possession of certain things doesn't make you happy; that you're happier without them; you are certainly happier without the five hindrances. But a lot of people - well, most people - consider that happiness consists in, you know, the five hindrances being present and indulged.

Paul: It's as if they - that's their idea of stimulation; if they've not been stimulated in that sense they feel they've not been stimulated.

S: Yes. You see when things are advertised, when books and films are advertised, you know, what are the sort of - the favoured epithets: 'It's very exciting!' 'It's stimulating!'

Ratnaketu: 'Exotic!'

S: Exotic, yes. Thrilling. I mean the epithets aren't sort of peaceful: 'Inducing contentment!' (laughter) - that's the last thing they want you to be.

So, I mean, I was mentioning during the interval, when you were outside, that years ago in Calcutta there was some discussion between, you know, myself and some of the Ceylon bhikkhus who were there talking about [154] the lay people, especially these lay people who came on pilgrimage with some of these bhikkhus. And one of the bhikkhus was saying, 'Well, it's really quite strange. I mean, these lay people are supposed to be wallowing in all worldly pleasures and having a really good time. But look. They're so miserable. And, you know, we bhikkhus, we're supposed to have given up all these pleasures and to be leading a very severe ascetic life, but we're much happier than they are.' And these weren't very spiritually-minded bhikkhus - they were quite ordinary, but they didn't have all these cares and worries that the lay people had ... who were supposedly enjoying themselves so much and having so many pleasures which the unfortunate bhikkhus had given up. But the bhikkhus were the happy ones, undoubtedly. Even on a quite ordinary level. I'm not saying that - as I said - that these bhikkhus were highly developed spiritually, or enjoying Nirvanic bliss, no. But they were just free from the cares and troubles that the lay people had - because they weren't concerned

about those sorts of pleasures.

So it's, in a way, a bit ironic, you know, you talk about giving up worldly pleasures, when you take up the spiritual life, but it's much more like giving up all the worldly miseries and taking up spiritual happiness.

But I really noticed that coming down here once or twice, and especially when I gave my talk on India, and, I think, a couple of years ago when I gave my Padmasambhava talk, you know, after being out during the day and seeing people's faces in London generally, just coming into an FWBO situation you really can't help noticing how much happier everybody looks than people outside. It's quite noticeable. Well, I've noticed this over the years in fact, even quite a long time ago.

But a lot of people would think, 'Well we just didn't have much to be happy about.' Especially a few years ago when Sukhavati was just a building site, but people were so happy even though they were working so hard, and had so little in the way of amenities - not even a bathroom, and just one toilet between everybody. Even that didn't always work. (laughter) But certainly no bath - after a while a sort of shower was fitted up, but that was all. It was really... people were living on an absolute building site, but they were happy - or most of them were happy, anyway.

But ... the modern way of thinking is, well, to be happy you need this and you need that. You need stimulation, you need [155] excitement, you need thrills, you need to go away somewhere, do something interesting, do something different, exciting, and all the rest of it.

Paul: I used to find a lot of people are threatened, if you can prove that - they ask you if you are happy. Because it undermines their ideals of happiness as well.

S: Yes. Yes. I mean, it's a direct challenge, that if you can be happy without a house of your own, without a mortgage, without a car, without a safe regular job, without a wife, without children, if you can be happy without these things it really makes them think, especially if they themselves have all these things ...

Ruciraketu: And are miserable.

S: ... they don't feel really happy; not as happy as you.

Ratnaketu: Some people are actually relieved, actually. I was surprised once, a few years ago, when I was housekeeper, our fridge broke down and we had to get the fridge fixed (unclear) - we needed a man. And two East-Enders ... and they had to walk into this community and we're... they were asking about it. And in the end they were saying, 'Oh it's really good to know that if it doesn't work out with the wife and kids, you know, there's somewhere I can go.' (laughter)

S: There is another way, another alternative.

Ratnaketu: Yes, and I was really bowled over, because they were just... in a way they could see that, they could sort of respect us, because we were living quite healthy happy lives and...

S: Yes. I think this is one of the reasons that men's communities, especially, are very, very important, because they do demonstrate an alternative way of life, in a quite radical sort of way. You might not feel that it's very radical actually living here, and it's become sort of just the way you live. But actually it is very radical, and very challenging - almost more than anything else we're doing - because it represents a break with the family - well, a break with society as it's usually organized, a break with consumerism, [156] a break with the world, really.

Paul: A quiet haven - especially being in London. It's so refreshing to come back to our community and just be quiet, relax.

S: Yes. But it should also be more than a quiet haven, you know. It should be an oasis of creativity (laughter) and all that. Anyway, it has to be a quiet haven first. You have to rest and relax first, yes? Anyway, let's carry on: 75.

Ruciraketu: 'To the one who sees within himself the Five Hindrances destroyed is born gladness. Of this gladness is born joy; of joy of mind comes a calming of the body. With calm of the body he feels ease, and from ease his mind is concentrated. Separating himself from sensuous enjoyment, aloof from evil things, but continuing to apply and sustain his thoughts with regard to objects external and ideational, he attains to and remains in the joy and ease resulting from detachment which constitute the first jhanic state. He pervades his body with the detachment, joy, and ease, till no part of it remains unsuffused with these.

'It is just as if, Maharaja, a skilled bath-attendant or his pupil, having strewn bath-powder in a bronze bowl, should sprinkle it all round with water and mix it so that the clusters of powder, taking up the water, are so pervaded with it that the whole flows like oil. So the bhikkhu pervades his body with the detachment, joy, and ease, till no part of it remains unsuffused with them.

'This, Maharaja, is a fruit of the life of a recluse belonging to this life, and more advanced and more excellent than the preceding fruits.'

S: Mm. So here it's quite interesting because the Buddha says, 'To the one who sees within himself the Five Hindrances destroyed is born gladness.' I mean, this all illustrates the fact that the spiritual life, the process of spiritual development, is, in a way, a natural process. You're constantly setting up the right conditions and, since you have the potential for higher spiritual development, once the right conditions are set up that development takes place almost automatically. Do you see what I mean?[157]

So, 'To one who sees within himself the Five Hindrances destroyed is born gladness.' When you see, well, there's no covetousness, there's nothing that you're craving for, you don't feel any ill will towards anyone, you just feel good will, you feel metta, you feel karuna. You're not agitated, you're not in a hurry, you're not disturbed, you're not dull and sleepy, you've no doubts. So on account of that, you feel really happy, you feel in a highly positive mood, and out of this positive mood, out of this gladness, is born joy, and because you feel joy of mind, everything is calmed down, the body is calmed down. 'Body' is sometimes here interpreted differently as meaning the whole body, the whole collection as it were of mental states becomes calmed down. And with the calm one feels ease, and because of that ease one's mind is concentrated. I mean, it reminds one of the positive nidanas, doesn't it? Do you remember?

That whole series, you're embarking on that whole series of positive mental states, each one more positive and creative than the preceding one. So concentration is sort of something that arises naturally. It's not something that you can force. It doesn't mean forcibly fixing your attention on something. It's the culmination of this whole sequence of positive mental states.

So, 'Separating himself from sensuous enjoyment, aloof from evil things, but continuing to apply and sustain his thoughts with regard to objects external and ideational, he attains to and remains in the joy and ease resulting from detachment which constitute the first jhanic state.' Here one really enters upon meditation, enters upon samatha experience.

'He pervades his body with the detachment, joy, and ease, till no part of it remains unsuffused with these.' The whole sort of psychophysical personality is suffused. It's all transformed by these higher mental states which one is now experiencing. And then there's the comparison of the bath powder, which is mixed with water.[158]

So we've now come back to the original point again, back to the Maharaja's question - whether there is a fruit of the life of a recluse, a samana - one devoted to the spiritual life - belonging to this life, and perceptible here and now. The Buddha's saying: 'Yes! You experience this dhyanic state.' I mean someone might ask you: 'What do you get out of the spiritual life?' 'What do you get out of doing all the things that you do?'

Well, what is the result? What is really the answer in the long run? It's not anything external. It's some transformation within yourself. It's some personal experience. It's the fact that you are more of a human being, you have attained a higher mental state. That is an actual fruit, which can be visible not only to you but to other people. Other people can see that you are happier than you were - maybe people who knew you years ago, in your sort of unregenerate days. They can't help admitting that there's a change. Even your relations can see that you've changed. Even they can see the difference in you. You just seem so much better, so much happier, more positive. So maybe in the end they sort of grudgingly admit that it may have something to do with the fact that you're a Buddhist.

So it's as though this sort of, in this case, dhyana state is just as tangible, just as concrete, as the things that are made by the potter and the carpenter and so on. They're no less concrete than that. If anything, they're more concrete - they're part of you, part of your own experience of yourself.

Anyway, like to go on? 77 and 78?[159]

Duncan: 'Further, Maharaja, the bhikkhu, from ceasing to apply and sustain his thought with regard to objects external and ideational, attains to that serenity of mind, that singleness of purpose, which is devoid of application to any object. He enters into and remains in the ease and joy produced by concentration and one-pointedness of mind, which are of the second jhanic state. With these qualities he pervades his body till no part of it remains unsuffused with them.

'This, Maharaja, is a fruit of the life of a recluse, belonging to this life and more advanced and more excellent than the preceding fruits.'

S: So here we pass from the first dhyana to the second dhyana, the main difference between

them being, of course, the absence of mental activity. One could say that the mental activity which still takes place in the first dhyana suffices to give one a sort of purpose and direction, but by the time you reach the second dhyana that purpose and that direction are so firmly established, and the whole trend of one's being is so definitely in that direction, one doesn't need the support of any sort of conceptual framework. Do you see what I mean? You don't need to reflect upon, well, say enlightenment and the purpose of human life. I mean you're actually moving in that direction, so you can stop thinking about it and just move to an even more positive mental and emotional state. You don't need what I've called the conceptual support - not for the time being. You can get on without it.

[Note: this was left out in the readings.

79: 'Further, Maharaja, the bhikkhu continues indifferent towards joy and disgust, observing his mental states with equanimity, mindful and aware, experiencing by means of that group of mentality that ease of which the Noble Ones declare: 'The one who has equanimity into and remains in the third jhanic state.'][160]

You see how gradual the whole process is, how natural the whole process is? It's as though if your life was properly organized, well, you'd end up meditating, you'd end up in the first, second dhyana, almost without having to make an effort.

Of course some people do find that when they go on retreat, when they do get into the country, their whole mental state seems to alter after a while, without them even making much of an effort, just on account of, you know, the difference in their surroundings. So that suppose the whole of life was organized, suppose the whole of society, the whole of civilization, was organized just to make it easier for you to meditate, well, you probably would, then, meditate very easily. Suppose noise was abolished, for instance there were no aircraft flying overhead when you were on retreat, no transistor sets blaring in the distance... (pause)

I think, you know - to came back to something we were talking about earlier - I think people could make it much easier for one another; because a lot of our irritations and difficulties and disturbances do come from other people, actually. So, certainly within a spiritual community, people should try to make it easy for one another and help one another. I mean, in some communities it takes the form of the puja and meditation leader of the week taking everybody tea in the morning to help them get up. Oh yes. There was a little poem about that, wasn't there, and it does seem to work - up to a point, up to a point. At least it helps create an atmosphere of positivity.

But this also more importantly introduces, or reintroduces, the point that you can't force people to lead a spiritual life. You can't even force them to discipline themselves. They've got to want to do it. So you can only encourage.

Anyway, we've got so far, and it is practically one o'clock. Shall we try and finish off after lunch. [break]

S: ...'Equanimity' in English comes nearer to what the Buddha is actually talking about. I have mentioned [161] this in connection with the four brahma-viharas: that the fourth brahma-vihara, upekkha or upeksa, shouldn't be rendered as 'indifference' but as 'equanimity'.

So, 'the bhikkhu continues ...' - well, in a state of equanimity one might say - '... towards joy and disgust'. So equanimity, one might say 'disgust'. I don't remember what the Pali word here is, but anyway, something which is sort of unpleasant. One doesn't react violently to it, one just observes it, one experiences equanimity and then the same with 'joy'. You notice that the Buddha is not saying that you should not experience joy, or even that you should not experience pleasure, but there must be this attitude of equanimity towards it - and that is, of course, quite different.

I mean this is one of the things that I noticed on many of our early retreats, and I commented on it frequently, that what usually happened was that people would come on retreat and, what with the meditation and silence and everything, they'd gradually become more mindful, but quite often as they became more mindful they'd become a bit less happy, a bit less joyful, so you'd have to sort of ease things up a bit and give them a bit more scope - well not to say a bit more rope. And so they'd be a bit more happy and lively and jolly, so the pleasure element, the joy element, would increase. But then what would tend to happen? They'd tend to be a bit carried away and become a bit unmindful. So it's as though it's very difficult to combine the two. If you're experiencing joy and pleasure very intensely it tends to conduce to loss of mindfulness; and if you're experiencing mindfulness, if you're preserving your mindfulness quite carefully, you can get a bit out of touch with your emotions - not that that is necessarily the case, but due to one's whole way of living perhaps. So you have to try and bring the two things together: that you can experience intense joy, you can experience intense pleasure, but mindfulness and equanimity are still there. The mind is not disturbed by those things, you're not distracted, not carried away by those things.

So you should be able to experience even intense delight but equanimity should be there, mindfulness should be there, awareness should be there - all sort of brought together. I mean in the effort to preserve your mindfulness you shouldn't eliminate pleasure, and in your determination to experience pleasure you shouldn't forget about mindfulness. You need both.

Anyway, let's carry on. 81.[162]

Ruciraketu: 'Further, Maharaja, the bhikkhu, from the giving up of ease and dis-ease, from having set down any former happiness or unhappiness, without dis-ease, without ease, in equanimity, mindful and entirely pure, attains to and remains in the fourth jhanic state. He remains sitting, having pervaded his body with purity of heart till no part of it remains unsuffused therewith.'

S: So 'ease'. The term that he's translated as ease is sukha. It's usually translated as happiness, or even pleasure; and dis-ease, of course, is dukkha - usually translated as pain or suffering. But here, equanimity is considered as a higher value even than pleasure, even than happiness. So one must be careful to see equanimity not as excluding happiness, but in a sense as carrying happiness to a higher level. Do you see what I mean? The level of happiness. There's an antithesis with happiness and unhappiness. So when you're just happy, just joyful, there's a sort of, in a way, element of disturbance, even of unbalance, but with equanimity the happiness becomes, as it were, stable. It's not sort of something separate, not something distinct, not something that stands out by itself. It's merged in the equanimity. Not that when you reach the stage of equanimity, you've left the happiness behind and you're no longer happy. The happiness is sort of taken up into the equanimity. Equanimity represents a sort of stabilization of happiness in such a way that it doesn't lose its disturbing quality. Usually

when you're happy, well, there's always the possibility of unhappiness. But in the case of equanimity, well, happiness is there, but there's no possibility of its disturbance, that is equanimity. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Voices: Yes.

S: This is quite a difficult state to achieve. I mean, usually when we experience happiness in the ordinary sense we become a bit obsessed with it, it becomes a bit too important to us. We can, if circumstances change, react to the opposite - that is to say, unhappiness - but with equanimity this is much less likely to happen.

But the really important point is that equanimity doesn't exclude happiness, just as equanimity as the fourth brahma-vihara doesn't [163] exclude metta, karuna, and mudita, they're all present but they're much more integrated, carried to a higher level.

All right, 83.

Duncan: 'With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed he directs and bends it to the purpose of perfect insight. In this way, he comes to know: This is my body, possessing material qualities, formed of the four elements, produced by father and mother, an accumulation of rice and fluid, a thing by its very nature impermanent, fragile, perishable, and subject to total destruction; and this is my consciousness, bound up with and dependent on it.'

S: So this paragraph represents an extremely important point. It represents the point of transition from samadhi to prajna, from samatha to vipassana. It represents the point at which Insight arises, or begins to arise. But it's quite important to see or to realize that Insight can be developed only by a mind of a certain kind - with your ordinary, everyday mind you can't develop Insight. Your mind needs to be trained or it needs to go through certain experiences first: those experiences, you know, being represented mainly by the whole range of samatha-type experiences, especially the dhyanas. Do you see what I mean? This is why the Buddha says, 'With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, he directs and bends it to the purpose of perfect insight.'

In other words, the mind has to be prepared before Insight can arise. This is the important point. It's not with that same mind that you, you know, carry on this or that work, the same mind with which you talk to your friends, the same mind, you know, with which you read books and newspapers, with the same mind that you sort of [164] plan your day. You can't really develop Insight with the same mind. Well, in a sense it's the same mind but in a sense it isn't, because it's that much more highly developed and refined. Hence terms like 'composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work', hm? Do you see what I mean? So it's as though the mind, by passing through the whole samatha experience, passing through the dhyanas, is cleansed and purified, and refined and made more pliable, and therefore able to develop Insight. It becomes more refined.

And then you just start seeing everything more clearly, with that kind of mind; and the first thing you see is your own body, because there you are, sitting, and you just realize, you know, the true nature of the body. That's the first object that is there. You see that it's impermanent, and this is the point of that passage. And this is not something to be taken negatively, it's

quite a positive experience. You see that the body is impermanent, and you see that the consciousness, your usual consciousness, your every day consciousness, is bound up with that body. You see this quite clearly. You see how it is conditioned. So this is the beginning of Insight. You don't regard the body as a self, you don't regard it as unchanging. You see that the body is also a process. I mean, a process that has a beginning, a process that also has an end. So, you know, you are less attached to it.

All right. Carry on with 84.

Ratnaketu: 'It is just as if, Maharaja, through a precious stone, a lapis lazuli, with eight bright facets, well polished, pure, very clear and unblemished throughout, there was strung a thread, blue, yellow, red, white, or cream. A man holding it in his hands would see with his eyes that this was so. Thus, Maharaja, is the bhikkhu with mind composed and free from defilements, directing it to the purpose of perfect insight. So he comes to know the impermanence of his body and its relationship with his consciousness.'[165]

S: What's the point of the comparison here, do you think?

David: I took it that until the jewel was well polished, pure and very clear, you wouldn't be able to see that thread inside. So it's like the mind.

S: Yes. Right. Though the thread representing the true nature of the body, you wouldn't be able to see that by means of Insight until the mind itself was clear and pure corresponding to, you know, the polishing of that jewel, removal of dust from that. So it just illustrates the clarity of that Insight, which can see through the appearances of things and see what things are really like, you know, undistorted by negative emotion. Also you're holding the jewel in your hand. It's a direct, personal experience. You're seeing it for yourself.

How important do you think this is, or how should one take this, this seeing the body as impermanent? I mean, does one see that, does one realize that?

Paul: Most of the time, no. Because it only takes a shock - like when Vangisa died. It came to quite a blow because I actually knew him quite personally. So it is those situations in which it does jolt you out of your complacency. But most people - it's very rarely.

S: Well sometimes you experience it, you know, when you fall ill and you realize, well, that you can't take the body for granted; it isn't completely under your control, it's subject to other forces and other influences that you can do nothing about, and one day it is going to disintegrate. But, I mean, otherwise, normally, we identify with the body quite strongly.

Daren: The body is something which is not under your control?

S: Hmm.

Daren: It seems to be virtually everything that, perhaps, is not.

S: But I mean, the fact that the body, you know, isn't under your control, that sort of touches you more nearly, in as much as you identify with the body. And very often you think the body is under your control, you can do with it as you like.[166]

When one is young and healthy one tends to think that, but when you fall ill you realize the body isn't under your control, it doesn't obey your will. It's obeying other sort of laws of nature. You realize there is a limit to your control and one day it's going to go out of control altogether, in the sense that it's just going to deteriorate and disintegrate, and there is nothing you can do about it.

Well yes, at the same time, I mean there is very little in life that is under your control: you can't control the weather, you can't control other people, can't control historical forces, can't control, you know, laws of nature; very little is under your direct control. The only thing that is really under your control is your own mind, actually. Your body is certainly not under your control, but your mind is to a great extent.

Ratnaketu: Even with most people their mind isn't particularly under their control.

S: Yes, indeed! So if even your mind isn't under your control, well, what on earth is under your control? Your mind can be under your control, if you make an effort, but nothing else really.

To control other people is almost impossible; one shouldn't even try. One can't really, unless you've got absolute sort of power of life and death over them. Even then you can only control their external actions, you still can't control their thoughts or their feelings. So you might as well give it up as a bad job trying to control other people: there's no point in it. Perhaps you can enlist their cooperation, yes, if you're skilful, but you can't really control them. If you try, they may go along with it for some time; sooner or later there will be a reaction.

So all that's really under your control is your own mind, and perhaps you can have some influence, some effect, on those other people who are open to you and to whom you are open. Apart from that, everything else is beyond your control. And certainly your body is. You may want your body to be strong and healthy but you may not be able to do anything about it - you've no choice.

So one sees this by means of Insight, you know, when the mind is a bit clear, a bit concentrated, a bit undisturbed. That's why sometimes it's quite useful, you know, to just fall ill, once in a while. You just realize, you know, your own limitations. Of course as you grow older you start realizing you can't do the things that [167] you used to do - anyway, I'm not going to dwell on that. (laughter)

Ruciraketu: We had a lady down at the Cherry Orchard one day, and she was over eighty, and she said that she felt just the same inside but just things seems to...

Ratnaketu: Wear out?

Ruciraketu: They were a bit slower, and things. But she was very bright, herself.

S: Well, my mother says the same thing. She's eighty-five but she says she feels just like she felt fifty, sixty years ago - doesn't feel any differently, she doesn't feel older, but she just finds it more difficult to do things. But the inner feeling is not a feeling of being old.

Ratnaketu: That must be really difficult, then, for people who are say eighty and they -

everybody else is sort of seeing them as some really old being of some sort, and they feel - and they're not talking with them or something like that.

S: Yes. But sometimes you can meet, you know, really old people who are young at heart and you can meet some young people who are already really old, and stuffy and dull, you know, they're sort of prematurely aged for one - they're almost born old, not old in the sense of being spiritually mature, but just old. And the young person who is old, you might say, is old indeed. If you're old even when you're young then you really are very old, and if you're young even when you're old then you're not really so old, just ready for your next rebirth! (laughter)

David: Something I've noticed with old people is if you look into their eyes it's like the actual eye itself doesn't seem to age, and I've spoken to very old people and looked - and you can still see the young person in their eyes.

S: Yes, you do see that. I mean some old people have got very bright eyes, quite youthful eyes, youth expressions.

Ruciraketu: There are things that rot, like the whites go yellow, but there's still a certain sparkle in them.[168]

S: One interesting thing as you get older is that - I mean this is what I certainly find, I don't know if others do - but, you know, you feel physically you're not quite able to do what you were able to do before - there's a little difference even though there isn't very much, but it is perceptible. But, on the other hand, you know, mentally one doesn't feel any different. On the other hand one might mentally feel even more full of energy. So it's as though in the early part of your life the mind and the body are much more together, because, you know, whatever the mind wants to do the body is able to carry out. So sometimes you can't distinguish between them for that reason. You feel like running, well, you can run. The body responds to the mind instantly, so it's very difficult to separate the two. But as you get older, you know, you want to do things, you feel like doing things mentally, but the body is not able to go along with that. So then your bodily experience starts separating out from your mental experience. And then, of course, what happens is you realize that, well, in a sense you are distinct from the body, that you feel as though you could go on for, you know, a few hundred years but, you know, the poor old body's not going to last as long as that, but you feel as though you could go on and on. And then you start, you know, feeling more convinced about rebirth, as distinct from, you know, intellectually convinced. You can really imagine, well there's enough energy and enough life there to go on and on. Even if the body isn't able to keep up, well, the mind is. And that energy, once this particular physical body drops off, will take another body to itself, and function through that for a while. Do you see what I mean? You actually feel this or experience this more as you get older, and the two things - namely the mind and the body - start dissociating, you know, from each other to some extent. You realize that they are really separate.

Then you can also start thinking, well, you know, if the mind can go on, the mind is getting more and more vigorous, even though the body is getting less vigorous, well, what about before birth? Then you can start thinking, well, there is this sort of stream of energy, you know, going, so to speak, from life to life. I mean it existed before the present body came into existence and it'll go on existing after the present body, you know, goes out of existence.

This particular body is just an incident in the total history of that particular stream of consciousness. So you can think [169] of yourself more as identified with that stream of consciousness than with a particular body. You know, in another life you might have had a quite different body. Why should you think of yourself as five-foot-two, or whatever it is, or brown-eyed. That's not you, that just, you know, the physical body in this particular incarnation, so to speak. I mean in your last life you might have been tall and blonde and blue-eyed, (laughter) and female! (laughter) Who knows? I mean these are all very relative things. There's the stream of consciousness. It's relatively stable. Of course it's not stable in the sense of not changing: it's changing all the time, even more than the body. But it has a greater continuity than the physical body - it's with you longer, so to speak. So with Insight you start understanding or seeing these things.

All right. Go on to 85.

Daren: 'With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, he directs and bends it to the purpose of producing a mind-made body. From this body he produces other bodies, having material qualities, mind made, complete with all constituent parts and qualities and not defective in any faculty.'

S: What do you make of this, this mind-made body - it's the manomayakaya, which means, literally, mind-made body. Have you come across this idea before - the mind-made body?

Ratnaketu: I've heard of it, but I don't know...

S: Well, one can take it first of all in a more general sort of way - you know, even, in a sense, in a more philosophical way. It's as though if you're leading a certain kind of life - you know, the kind of life that is described here, that the bhikkhu is described as leading - and if you're practising meditation, and if you've got experience of the dhyanas, well, it's as though you become completely transformed. It's as though one might say that, you [170] know, corresponding to the physical body, there is a sort of mind-made body in the ordinary sense. There's a sort of mental personality corresponding to the physical personality and this mental personality is made up of all your thoughts and feelings, emotions. So usually it's a very mixed nature, because some of your thoughts, some of your feelings, are positive, some are negative, some are skilful, some are unskilful, yes? Well what happens is, as a result of the meditation, as a result of the dhyana experience, the thoughts and the feelings that make up your, as it were, mental body become entirely skilful. There are no unskilful thoughts or feelings there at all. So that means an entirely new sort of mental body, or, if you like, psychological personality, is produced. Do you see what I mean? But one can take it even further than that, as the text seems to do. The text sort of posits that there comes into existence at this stage, as a result of your meditative experience, in a quite literal sense, a sort of - well 'mental' is the wrong word here - it's sort of meditative counterpart of your ordinary personality. And it's through, or with the help of, this meditative counterpart that there take place, or that you even sort of do, the various things which are classified as sort of supernormal powers or supernormal experiences. Do you see what I mean? It says for instance that, 'From this body he produces other bodies, having material qualities, mind-made, complete with all constituent parts and qualities and not defective in any faculty.' For instance, this mind-made body has, so to speak, a mind-made ear. With this mind-made ear it hears things happening at a distance. Do you see what I mean? It's not that there is literally a body, not even a mind-made body, but there is a sort of, you know, subtle, almost

psychic, counterpart to the physical body, with subtle psychic senses. And according to Buddhism this phenomenon explains things like telepathy and clairaudience and clairvoyance and so on, yes? And I mean, if you've read The Thousand-Petalled Lotus you'll remember that, you know, some years ago in India I did have, you know, some experience of some of these things.[171]

So it's as though a new personality has been built up, and that new personality can, you know, operate in a different kind of way, on a subtle sort of level. So this is what the text calls the mind-made body, though that expression is not really very happy - it's more like a sort of - what's the word - almost spiritual body one might say.

Ruciraketu: What sort of material qualities would it have, then?

S: Well, they would be subtle material qualities, not material in the gross sense. You can say it's a counterpart of the ordinary body, but it's all subtle. Hence the expression 'the mind-made body', the manomayakaya. It's not like the ordinary mind. You see the ordinary mind is not really coherent enough to be a body. It's so mixed up with all sorts of thoughts and feelings, positive and negative, skilful and unskilful. But the mind-made body is much more coherent because it's made up entirely of skilful mental states, skilful thoughts, skilful emotions. So it's more like a body. It's sort of held together, it coheres more.

Ratnaketu: It's been formed.

S: It's been formed, and therefore it has more power, more energy, and it can produce certain effects, it has certain faculties, it can function, even producing so-called miracles, and so on. Do you see what I mean?

Daren: Is there some school of Buddhism which develops the philosophy connected with the mind-made body?

S: Well, in the Vajrayana they go into it a bit more. But, broadly speaking, this is, you know, connected with meditation as such, which is common of course to all schools. I mean, if you meditate regularly and systematically, especially if you have the experience of the dhyanas, you should, as it were, form this mind-made body which then becomes the basis of more subtle activity on your part - your sort of centre of consciousness shifts more to that. Do you see what I mean? You identify yourself less with the physical body and more with that subtle [172] mental body. But that's something that you have to build up and form, it doesn't exist yet, it has to be brought into existence. All you've got at present are various bits and pieces, some of which you can use to build up that mental body, and others which you just have to discard and throw away.

Daren: What about 'he produces other bodies'?

S: Because, I mean, the ordinary physical body, you know, can produce other physical bodies - mainly by way of sexual reproduction. But in the case of this mental body it can, as it were, divide itself into, you know, a number of bodies. It's, as it were, both one and multiple, you could say. But at an even higher level than the text is concerned with, I mean, one of these mental bodies can sort of animate some other physical body. There are all sorts of strange stories in this connection (pause). Or, you know, can produce effects at a distance, and so on.

Or even be seen at a distance.

Ratnaketu: Would this mind-made body be the body you would experience like in the bardo, when you died?

S: Yes, this is the body you experience in the bardo.

Ratnaketu: So if you did a lot of meditation and that and had a sort of well-unified and formed mind-made body, you wouldn't be so scattered and dispersed.

S: No, you'd have a much more stable mind-made body in the bardo and therefore be in a much better position to assimilate any positive spiritual experiences that you had in that state, yes?

You might even say that in a very rudimentary form, yes, the mental body is already there, but it's very rudimentary. It needs developing and building-up and strengthening and clarifying and purifying and extending, and so on. And the main way of doing that is through meditation.

Ruciraketu: Well, what's the difference between subtle material qualities and material qualities?[173]

S: It's a difference of degree, because Buddhism doesn't really sort of make an absolute distinction between the so-called mind and the so-called grosser form of mind. Mind is a subtle form of matter. So Buddhism is neither materialistic nor as it were idealistic. It doesn't say that matter is real and mind is unreal, that mind is real and matter is unreal. Different degrees of subtlety, refinement.

Paul: You get that in your dreams sometimes. You can see like a landscape, but it's a lot more subtle than the landscape you see in your awake state.

S: Or like a visualization, a visualized image, you know, it's more subtle, at the same time more powerful. Right; on to 87. This describes some of these so-called psychic powers.

David: 'With mind thus composed cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, he directs and bends it to the various psychic powers. He experiences many kinds. From one form he becomes many, and from many becomes one again. He becomes visible or invisible, passes through walls and rocks without touching them as if they were space. He dives into and emerges from the earth as if it were water, and walks on water without disturbing the surface as if it were land. Sitting cross-legged he moves in the sky like a bird. The sun and moon in all their majesty he touches and strokes with his hand, continuing with his body up to the realm of Brahma.'[174]

S: This is a sort of stock passage, as it were, a stock description of those powers. It's often taken to apply to the physical body but it definitely applies to the mind-made body. Do you see what I mean? It's the mind-made body that can pass through walls or rocks without touching them, or dive into the earth, or walk on the water. In other words, the mind-made body is operating in a different sphere altogether - it's not limited by material things, material conditions. It's in this mind-made body, so to speak, that one undergoes further spiritual

experiences. The physical body is not able to contain those experiences; only the mind-made body is subtle enough to do so, or refined enough to so, yes?

Ruciraketu: So in the meantime the physical body will be sitting back somewhere meditating?

S: Yes, though in the case of some people, the mind-made body can be operating at the same time that the physical body is operating too. One doesn't always know, so to speak, what the mind-made body is doing. Sometimes the mind-made body can be operating without you, so to speak, knowing. Though at the same time you are the mind-made body. I mean effects can be produced without your necessarily knowing anything about it. You perhaps haven't fully unified all your different bodies. Anyway, go on to 88.

Ruciraketu: 'It is just as if, Maharaja, a skilled potter or his apprentice, with well-prepared clay, desiring to make some sort of bowl or dish, would produce it; or as an expert ivory-worker or goldsmith with well-prepared material would produce with it whatever shape he wished. Just so, Maharaja, is the bhikkhu with mind composed and free from defilements, directing it to the purpose of achieving psychic powers.'

S: So this is what is usually called in the West clairaudience, that is to say, you have, so to speak, this mental body, this mind produced body or mind-made body. It has its various senses, so to [175] speak, its subtle sense of hearing. And this is described as, very often, the 'divine ear' or 'divine hearing'. It's divine in the sense of deva-like. It's the...

[end of tape 6]

S: ...It's not divine in the sort of Christian theological sense, it's not divine in the sense of having anything to do with God with a capital G. It's divine in the sense it pertains to the higher dhyanic spheres, which correspond to the worlds of the gods. You're still within the sphere of the mundane don't forget; these are mundane powers, not transcendental powers. So the dibba-sota, the divine hearing or celestial hearing, is this very sort of subtle sense of hearing, which transcends normal physical conditions. When you have this sort of subtle sense of hearing, this divine hearing, you can sometimes hear people speaking at a distance. I've mentioned an example of this in The Thousand-Petalled Lotus on the part of a friend of mine. Do you remember this? No? Only well, I've mentioned it, anyway. And not only that, not only can you sometimes hear sort of sounds at a distance, especially of people with whom you are closely connected, but you can even hear sounds, music, coming from other worlds. Sometimes people in meditation hear musical sounds. Did you know, or has anyone had any experience of, this? Sometimes you can hear sort of musical sounds, like you hear a sound like a flute, or you hear a sound, which is like all sorts of sounds combined. So these are all experiences of this sort of celestial hearing. You become much more sensitive. In classical times - in Plato, and I think it was in Pythagoras - they talk about hearing the music of the spheres: it's something like that. You hear these sort of subtle heavenly sounds because, you know, a subtle organ of hearing has awoken or has been developed.

Paul: Is it the same as smell? I've experienced that with smells.

S: Ah, that raises an interesting point. I mean, there are these five physical senses, and they all have their subtle counterparts, but it's as though the sense of hearing and the sense of sight are more highly developed than the others in human beings. So normally it's clairvoyance and

clairaudience that are developed. Do you see what I mean?

So usually in meditation you're more likely to maybe see things at a distance, or have visions, or hear, say, heavenly music. You're less likely to have tactile sensations, less likely to smell and taste things [176] in a subtle way. But yes, sometimes you do experience subtle smells in the course of meditation. Again, I don't know if anyone's had any experience of this, but you can.

Paul: Yes, I've had that myself.

S: Yes you can experience a scent of roses, or something like that, when there's absolutely no external cause for it. That's because this subtle sense of hearing has been aroused, and you can have, sometimes, subtle sensations of touch. You can be sitting in a breeze blowing against you, but there's no external source of that. It means the subtle tactile sense has been awoken. Taste, which is the grossest of senses, seems to be the one which one very rarely experiences in a subtle form. Usually sight, hearing, and then smell, and then touch, and taste is last. So all this indicates this development of the subtle mental body, I mean a greater degree of refinement of the whole being, mainly a result of the meditation experience.

You find - we'll be coming on to this in a minute in the text - but also telepathy: you know, exchange of thoughts with other people. You often find this if you practise meditation, and if you practise with other people and you are very close to certain people, a certain telepathic exchange takes place between you. Even in a quite ordinary life this sometimes happens between different people, because you are, so to speak, on the same wavelength; so sometimes thoughts and feelings do go to and fro.

I remember some years ago I was staying with somebody, and he used to be going through ups and downs, and I'd always know what he was experiencing. Even if he was in the next room and I hadn't seen him for some time, I'd know that he had a certain change of mood - it would sort of come through the wall. And I'd go in and say, 'Hello. What's the matter now?' (laughter) It was as tangible as that. It was almost as though particular vibes started coming through the wall. It was like that, I knew that his mood had changed. Anyway, I had to go and have a little chat with him to make him all right, but that sort of thing does happen. Anyway 89 to 91.

Duncan: 'With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, he directs and bends [177] it to the faculty of celestial hearing. With the purity of celestial hearing, beyond that of human capacity, he hears sounds both celestial and human far and near. With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, he directs and bends it to the knowledge of the understanding of mind. Having understood his own mind he comes to know the minds of other beings, other men. The thought possessed of anger he knows to be angry. The thought free of anger he knows to be so. The thought possessed or free of hatred, possessed or free of delusion, upset or disturbed, mature or undeveloped, high or mean, composed or disturbed, free or enslaved, he knows to be accordingly.'

S: The key sentence, in a way, is 'Having understood his own mind he comes to know the minds of other beings, other men.' If you study your own mind - I'm speaking now in a quite ordinary sense - you'll come to understand the minds of other people. All your minds work in

the same way, hm? So if you understand the workings of your own mind, you'll understand the workings of the minds of other people. So your own mind is within you own direct observation. The minds of other people are not within your direct observation - unless you develop this higher almost telepathic sensitivity, and then, you know, you can pick up how people are feeling. I mean, sometimes this does happen, even in the Friends, someone says, 'Come on, I know you're feeling really angry.' And you say 'Well, no I'm not. Not at all.' 'Yes. You're just not being open with me, you're not acknowledging it. You are angry. I feel that you are angry.' In this way one person's feeling is sort of imposed upon another. So clearly one must avoid doing that kind of thing. But yes, the possibility of actually seeing, actually feeling, actually experiencing another person's mental state is there. And especially on your own, and then people come to see you: well, you can then at once tell what sort of mental state that they're in. It's quite obvious.

Paul: Alaya was saying that when he was at Vajraloka he found after a while he could meditate next to someone and he could know instinctively if his mind was disturbed or clear - he could pick [178] it up quite clearly.

S: Anyway, you have to be quite careful at first that you aren't sort of, as we say, projecting on to the other person: you have to be quite sure about that. But none the less, it is true, as the text says, that you can know the thoughts of other people. I mean, you have to be careful, also, how you understand that. You may not necessarily know exactly what they're thinking of, but you can pick up on their general, their overall, mental state, especially emotional state. You can feel whether they're low or they're high, whether they're happy or unhappy. You may not know exactly what it is that is making them happy or unhappy, but you certainly pick up on their overall feeling tone, as it were. In fact you should be a bit sensitive to people in this way normally, especially if you do any meditation at all. You should be able to tell what mood they're in and, you know, act accordingly, not do anything that jars upon their mood.

All right, 93. Read the whole of 93. In fact 93 and 94.

Ratnaketu: 'With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, he directs and bends it to the knowledge of recollection of his former dwelling-places. He calls to mind one birth, two births, three - a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand births in ascending and descending aeons. He recollects, 'In such and such a place my name, ancestry, appearance, food, happy and sorrowful experiences, were thus and thus, coming to an end at such and such an age. Then my consciousness died down, arising again in such and such a place. There my name, ancestry, appearance, food, happy and sorrowful experiences, were thus and thus, coming to an end at such and such an age; my consciousness died down and arose again here.' In such fashion he calls to mind, point by point, the activities and circumstances of the existences in which he was previously engaged.

It is just as if a man should go from his own village to another village, and from that one to yet another village, returning afterwards to his own. It would seem to him, 'I went from my own village to such and such a village; there I stood thus, sat thus, spoke thus, [179] kept silence thus. From there I came to such and such a village and there stood, sat, spoke, kept silence, in this or that fashion; and from there I came back to my own village.' Just so the bhikkhu calls to mind, point by point, the activities and circumstances of the existences in which he was previously engaged.

This, Maharaja, is a fruit of the life of a recluse, belonging to this life and more advanced and excellent than the former fruits.'

S: So the Buddha is referring here, in this last little paragraph, to all these psychic powers. These are all fruits of the life of recluse, fruits of meditation. But it is important to point out that things like the recollection of one's previous existences don't form a sort of necessary stage on the path. They are, they represent, things that one can do, things that the mind can do, things that mind-made body can do, but not things that you have to do in order to develop. I mean some people develop them, others don't. To some extent it seems to depend upon temperament. For instance, in the case of Sariputta: Sariputta had no knowledge of his previous births it would seem, whereas Moggallana did, because in Moggallana the psychic powers were very well developed. Whereas they weren't in Sariputta - even though they were both Arahants.

So you may or may not develop these psychic powers but what is necessary, you should at least have sufficient experience of meditation, sufficient experience of dhyana states, to provide a basis for the development of psychic powers. But in some people they seem to develop, well, quite naturally. Sometimes it's said they must have done a lot of meditation in previous lives. Maybe so, maybe not - it's difficult to say.

Paul: These subtle powers can be quite a subtle trap, you can get caught up in that ...[180]

S: Yes, there is a danger, too.

Paul: Is it just a stage?

S: Well, usually, of course, one might say the ordinary senses, you how, give one enough trouble, without being caught up in subtle ones. But, none the less, subtle senses do sometimes develop of their own accord as a result of one's overall development.

All right, let's press on. 95.

Daren: 'With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, the bhikkhu directs and bends it to the knowledge of the consciousness disconnecting the present life and that of rebirth. With the purity of the celestial eye, beyond the normal capacity of man, he sees beings passing from one state of existence to another, being reborn humble or exalted, beautiful or ugly, happy or miserable, as results of their past actions. He knows: 'These beings, in consequence of bad action of body, of speech, or of mind, of finding fault with noble persons, of holding wrong views, bear the results of wrong views. On the dissolution of the body at death these come to another existence in a place of woe. But on the other hand, as a result of good body-action, good speech-action, and good mind-action, not finding fault with noble people, holding right views, beings bear the results of right views. On the dissolution of the body at death they come into existence in a happy, heavenly world.' Thus with the purity of the celestial eye, beyond the normal capacity of man, he sees beings passing away and arising up again and knows them to be doing so according to their past actions.'

S: Just carry on and read 96 that gives the illustration.

Daren: 'It is just as a man, standing on the terrace of a house at a big crossroads, would see, with his human eyesight, people going in or coming out of the houses, walking along the streets, or sitting down in the square in the middle. Just so, with the celestial eye are seen people arising in states of misery or happiness according to their past actions.[181]

'This, Maharaja, is a fruit of the life of a recluse, belonging to this life, and more advanced and excellent than the former fruits.'

S: So this is the dibba-cakkhu as it is called, the divine eye, which actually sees the workings of the law of karma - actually sees why people have been reborn, or how they will be reborn in the future. So again this is something which can be developed but which isn't necessary from the point of view of one's overall spiritual development. Perhaps one shouldn't, in a way, take it too literally. When one sees certain people it isn't as though one has a sort of vision of their future state, but one can see that the way they are carrying on, the way they are behaving, is going to have certain pitiable consequences: you see that very clearly. So this faculty is more of that nature. Not that you necessarily have a sort of vision of the future. Because your mind is very clear you can see, you know, the sort of direction in which they are heading or you can see what situations in the past might have brought about their present state.

So all this is 'a fruit of the life of a recluse'. So it's as though the life of a recluse has quite a lot of fruits. Anyway, someone like to read 97?

David: 'With mind thus composed, cleansed, free from defilements, pliant and fit for work, remaining unperturbed, he directs and bends it to the knowledge of the destruction of the asavas. He comes to know what, in absolute truth, suffering is, what in absolute truth are the origin of suffering, and the way to the cessation of suffering. He comes to know what, in absolute truth, are the asavas, their origin, their cessation, and the way to their cessation. From knowing and seeing thus, his mind is freed from the asava of sense-desires, from the asava of love of the process of life, from the asava of lack of the higher knowledge; he knows: 'Exhausted is birth; the religious life is [182] fulfilled to perfection; that which should be done has been done; there will be no more of the present state.'

S: Then 98 for illustration.

David: 'It is just as if, Maharaja, in a pool fed by a hidden spring, the water clear, very bright and quite still, a man standing on the edge should see with his human eyesight shells, oysters, gravel, pebbles, shoals of fish moving and at rest. So does the vision become clear when there are known in absolute truth what are suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way to the cessation of suffering, and the truth concerning the asavas, their origin, cessation, and the way to their cessation. One knows: 'I am free'. One knows: 'Exhausted is birth; the religious life is fulfilled to perfection; that which should be done has been done; there will be no more of the present state.'

'This, Maharaja, is a fruit of the life of a recluse, belonging to this life, more advanced and more excellent than the former fruits; and of the fruits of the life of a recluse, belonging to this life, there is no other fruit more advanced or more excellent than this fruit.'

S: So, in this section, in this paragraph, one comes to the real point. The real fruit of the life of a recluse is Enlightenment itself; this is the most tangible benefit. And here the experience

of Enlightenment is explained in terms of understanding the Four Noble Truths and the destruction of the asavas or biases towards mundane existence. The asavas are the embodiments of the gravitational pull of the conditioned.

So the Buddha is, as it were, saying to the Maharaja that the fruits of the life of a recluse are really very tangible; there's a definite sort of meaning and purpose in the life of a samana, in the spiritual life. Not just something vague and undecided. There's a definite tangible result, a definite tangible fruit, which is higher human development generally and, in particular, Enlightenment itself, which is just as concrete a thing as the wheel produced by the wheelwright or the pot by the potter. Enlightenment is as concrete as that or, if anything, it's more concrete. It's not just vague and insubstantial.

So I think maybe it's quite important to emphasize this point: that the spiritual life is something practical. There is a practical result; though it's a result which shows itself in one's own mind and one's own character, one's own experience. But it is that which is important, not external achievements, not external possessions, and so on.[183]

Paul: These days it's kind of like if you don't produce physical wealth you're kind of classified as a sort of loser. You're not really taken that seriously - unless you produce or illustrate that there's more security in what you've got than in what they've got.

S: Anyway, read the concluding paragraph:

Ruciraketu: 'The Exalted One having spoken thus, the Raja of Magadha, son of the Vedeha princess, said to him: 'Excellent, Sir. Excellent! It is as if that which has been covered over should be revealed; or that which had gone astray should be put right, or that an oil-lamp should be brought into darkness so that he who has eyes may see material forms. Even so has the Exalted One made known by many figures of speech the Doctrine of Truth. And now, sir, I go for Refuge to the Exalted One, to his Dhamma, and to his sangha of bhikkhus. May the Exalted One receive me as having taken that Refuge from this day onwards and as long as life shall last. Sin overcame me, sir. Foolish, misled, and evil, I gained supremacy by taking the life of my father, a righteous ruler. May the Exalted One accept this declaration of my sin that I may restrain myself in future.'

'Surely, Maharaja, sin overcame you. But since you have recognized that you were overcome by sin, thus being made to act against truth and morality, we accept your acknowledgement. For according to the Discipline of the Noble Ones he who recognizes himself as having been overcome by sin, and so to have acted against truth and morality, attains to restraint in future.'

'The Maharaja having taken his leave, the Buddha remarked that, but for the murder of his father, the eye of truth would have arisen in him, even during the visit just concluded.

'The company of bhikkhus rejoiced at the Buddha's Discourse.'[184]

S: So one can see the effects that the Buddha's discourse had on the king, Ajatasattu, though due to his previous heavily unskilful action he wasn't able to benefit from the impact of the Buddha's teaching, you know, to the full extent. But at least he's benefited to some extent: he's recognized the evil that he'd done and he confesses that to the Buddha, so to that extent he attains some peace of mind. And of course he goes for refuge, though it is of course a

provisional - or rather it's the effective - Going for Refuge. Had the eye of truth arisen, the dhamma-cakkhu, well that would have been a real Going for Refuge, as we say: transcendental Going for Refuge.

So what's the overall trend, or if you like, the overall message of the sutta? What sort of impression does it leave you with, what sort of idea?

Ruciraketu: It leaves you with the idea of a natural process, a natural progression.

S: Yes, which is not natural in the sense of taking place anyway, as a result of collective evolution, lower evolution, but if you set up the right conditions. I mean the right conditions are very important. It's not so much that you strive and struggle directly, but you just set up the right conditions so that your mind can almost, well, naturally rise to a certain level.

Paul: You get the feeling that it shows you your own potential as well: like if you set up these conditions that's what will happen and that's what will follow on.

S: Yes. You see, one of the things that I saw in the very early days of the Friends which impressed me very much was the extent to which quite ordinary people could change, even in the course of a week, if you just took them away from the city and you put them down in the country under more favourable conditions and just got them doing a bit of meditation, listening to a few taped lectures, and a bit of communication, and it seemed to make such a big difference to them - just those change of conditions.

Of course, it's not really quite as simple as that, because, you know, you could say, well, if people were to remain under those more ideal conditions indefinitely, they'd just get better and better, but it doesn't work like that because they've got their own deep-seated [185] unskilful tendencies and, if you kept them under those admittedly ideal conditions longer than for a certain period which they could tolerate, they'd start reacting very strongly and the unskilful tendencies would show themselves, even in the midst of the favourable situation. So people have to be ready for longer stays under these more favourable conditions. I mean someone might benefit a lot from one week's retreat but it doesn't mean he'd benefit twice as much from a two week retreat, or ten times as much from a ten week retreat. It doesn't follow. It doesn't follow that if you just put him down at Vajraloka, you know, he'd be Enlightened within a year or two. But you might be tempted to think so, seeing how much just a week on retreat does for people. But there are quite deeply rooted tendencies - the asavas, the biases towards mundane existence - which would assert themselves, or get in the way. They need to be tackled, you know, systematically, and over a much longer period.

Paul: I usually find it quite encouraging, like for myself, you know. I go on retreat and you can get in a very subtle state, and you know it, and that when you get back it's going to fade, it won't last. You'd probably have some of it for a while but it kind of fades away. But you know that like you can do it. You can, in cases like this, keep up the momentum, by just getting your life more ordered, a lot more simple and, well, just so it's all flowing in the right direction - that you can do it.

S: Yes.

David: I'm slightly confused by this sentence. Perhaps what Paul said is connected with this?

'For according to the Discipline of the Noble One's he who recognizes himself as having been overcome by sin, and so to have acted against truth and morality attains to restraint in future.' Could you explain this?

S: Well one of the purposes of confession is just to recognize - I mean, one of the aspects of confession is to recognize what you've actually done. I mean very often people don't know what they've done because they've acted blindly, been overcome by their emotions. But now you see what you've done, and you admit what you've done. You see that you've done harm: maybe to yourself, maybe to other people, maybe to both. So when you see this you certainly don't want to repeat the [186] experience, you don't want to behave that way again. So you not only, you know, recognize what you've done in the past, but you see your way more clearly in the future: that you must not do that thing again, because it did just have such a bad effect, on you and on others. So you, as it were, commit yourself not to do that in the future.

I mean, suppose you've lost your temper and hit someone, well, it's not just that you're sorry for what you've done. You just see, I mean, how bad it was, what a bad effect it had on your own mind, on the mind of the other person. And you see that so clearly that you just don't want to do that sort of thing ever again. So you undertake not to do it again.

Paul: Could it work on being open as well? Because the initial reaction like when you make a mistake is like to hide it and not actually admit it. Even if you ...

S: Well, even if you admit it to yourself sometimes.

Paul: But, if you actually admit it to like your friends like you have made a mistake: there you are being open. It's a practice of being open - not just being open to your good side but being prepared to be open to your worse side. (long pause)

S: Maybe sometime you should read through the complete translation of the sutta, in the Digha Nikaya: Long Discourses of the Buddha. It's Rhys David's Dialogues of the Buddha. Because in a way the fact that it's condensed here means that the main outline, the outline of the argument, so to speak, stands out more clearly. So having sort of grasped that, one can read the more detailed version, which is, in fact, quite detailed in parts - so much so that you're in danger of losing the thread. But, you know, studying this particular version, the main thread stands out quite clearly; one just does get that impression of overall progression.

All right. Let's leave it there for the time being.

Paul: Thank you.

S: Right.

[end of Samannaphala Sutta seminar]

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