

**Transcription of a seminar on
The Great Chapter (Mahavagga) of the Sutta Nipata**

(trans. E. M. Hare as "Woven Cadences", OUP London 1945; also using trans. Lord Chalmers as "Buddha's Teachings", OUP 1932) held at Padmaloka in July 1976.

Present: Ugyen Sangharakshita, Aloka, Devamitra, Chintamani, Ratnapani, Vimalamitra, Phil Shrivell, Dick Meyers, Dave Living, Andy Friends.

Day one

S: All right, so there's the Great Chapter, the Mahavagga of the Sutta Nipata, so before we begin I'm just wondering if people have got any idea at all about Buddhist literature, that is to say Buddhist scriptures, and about the place of the Sutta Nipata in that literature, or any idea about what sort of text the Sutta Nipata is. Has anyone got any idea at all on any of these topics?

Devamitra: It is one of the oldest sections of the Sutta Pitaka.

S: That's true, yes. But maybe we'd better go back a bit and consider a few points which are even more fundamental than that - first of all about Buddhist scriptures in general. I use the term scriptures - although it isn't a very good one - just because of its religious connotations. But how do we come to have these scriptures? What are these scriptures basically? Has anybody got any ideas about that?

Dave: It is what the monks have remembered. They have passed them on.

S: What monks have remembered. Only monks?

Devamitra: Disciples of the Buddha.

S: Disciples of the Buddha, yes. I think it is important to bear in mind that the Buddha taught orally, that in the Buddha's day all teaching was oral. Apparently writing was known and reading was known, but it seems to have been used mainly for commercial purposes, so anything that was really important was not committed to writing. If something was of real importance you learned it, you heard it from a teacher and you committed it to memory. You memorized it, you learned it by heart in the full sense of the term and turned it over in your mind. You didn't think in terms of writing it down; that would suggest that you might forget it, and if it was a really important teaching how could you possibly forget it? So you bore it in mind. So all teaching was oral teaching and the Buddha taught orally, sometimes teaching individuals, sometimes teaching groups of disciples, sometimes teaching quite large numbers of people, and they all remembered what he had said, they bore in mind what he had said. [2] And especially Ananda, we are told, according to tradition, bore in mind what the Buddha had said, not only to himself but to other people as well when Ananda was present. Ananda was the constant companion of the Buddha for the last twenty or twenty-five years of his life. He accompanied the Buddha everywhere, heard virtually everything that the Buddha said during that period, and he seems to have had a very, very retentive memory. So after the Buddha's death, after the Buddha's parinirvana, the community of the disciples relied very, very heavily in fact on Ananda for his recollections of what the Buddha had said, and these were passed on. Not only Ananda's but the recollection of other disciples too were passed on. In a sense they were pooled, and later generations of disciples tried to learn as much as possible of what had been remembered by heart and then passed it on to their disciples. And it was only written down some four or five hundred years after the Buddha's own time. So for four or five hundred years there was purely oral tradition. And of course they weren't simply remembered, they were also - still orally - analysing and classifying and arranging the teachings so that when they did come to be written down they were already arranged and organized. For instance, there were a number of, as it were, formal discourses given by the

Buddha and some of these were rather long discourses, others were of medium length, so by the time the oral tradition came to be written down the disciples had already sorted out, for instance, long discourses from short discourses. So there was a whole collection, an oral collection, of long discourses which we now call the Digha Nikaya, the "long collection" in Pali, and another collection of medium length discourses which we now call the Majjhima Nikaya in Pali, and in the same way some short teachings were collected and arranged under different headings according to subject, giving us eventually what is called the Samyutta Nikaya, translated as the "kindred sayings", kindred sayings on a particular topic, sayings on the same topic. So in this way, during that period of oral transmission, teachings were being arranged, classified, sifted, organized into what eventually became books when they were written down. So there was an immense amount of activity of this sort going on, and monks were constantly, apparently, meeting together and comparing what they knew, what they remembered, and tried to pool their resources, pool their recollections, generation by generation. And of course there were differences. People didn't always remember things in quite the same way. In fact the Buddha himself might have given a slightly different version or presentation of the teaching to different people at different times, so they also had to compare these differences. Sometimes teachings might have been dropped, or particular versions might have been dropped. We do have different versions of the same teaching, in some cases several different versions of the same teaching, all surviving in the existing Buddhist scriptures. And some scholars of course believe that the monks added little bits of [3] their own, sometimes explanatory to make the Buddha's own words clearer, but sometimes it may be the monks or the disciples thought "Well, the Buddha must have said this or he must have made that particular point," so they included it. This is of course what modern Western scholars believe. In the East of course, traditionally, every word of the scriptures that is attributed to the Buddha is believed to have been uttered by the Buddha himself. But notwithstanding that, we can see that, to take for instance the Pali canon, this particular collection - or this particular version does contain material which seems closer to the original sources, closer to the Buddha's own day, closer to the Buddha himself, than other material. And the Sutta Nipata is one of those books which as far as we can tell is very close indeed to the Buddha's own teaching, to the Buddha's own words.

This is not to say that the Sutta Nipata itself is completely uniform. Some parts even of the Sutta Nipata seem older than others. One part, in fact - not the part we are going to study this week - is so old that it is actually quoted from and referred to by other parts of the scriptures themselves, and there is even a commentary on it also included in the scriptures, which is rather interesting. As for where the Sutta Nipata comes in the scriptures, it is part of the Pali canon. Perhaps I should explain that the Buddha had encouraged people to learn his teaching in their own language or their own dialect. He was once asked whether his teaching should not be translated into Sanskrit - this was during his own lifetime - and he said, "No. Let everyone learn the teaching in his or her own dialect." So he himself seems to have spoken in different dialects according to where he was in India where he was teaching. And after his death there were different traditions, different linguistic traditions, of the teaching. There was one in the language which we now call Pali - though strictly speaking there is no such thing as the Pali language. There was another tradition in Sanskrit, another in Apabhramsa, another one in a language called Pisacha. And different schools transmitted the teachings - first of all orally than as literary traditions - in these different dialects. Now the only complete collection of these early teachings which we have is the one which has come down in Pali. We only have fragments of the Sanskrit one. I'm leaving aside the Mahayana sutras, which came later. We have only fragments of the Sanskrit version of the early teaching, in Sanskrit together with some translations in Tibetan and Chinese. We have very, very little either in the original languages or in translation of either the Pisacha or the Apabhramsa linguistic traditions.

So it is important to remember that the Pali canon, which has been edited and translated into English by the Pali Text Society, represents only a section of that whole vast literature which was of course originally purely oral tradition. So the Sutta Nipata belongs to that, to the Pali canon. The Pali canon consists of three great collections. I don't know if you know all this, you probably do. [4] There was the collection of Vinaya, which is roughly speaking rules for the monks. We will talk about expressions like monks in a minute. Rules for the monks,

though it is very much more than that. It also contains quite a lot of information about the Buddha and the history of his whole movement and gives various teachings. So there is the Vinaya Pitaka, the Collection of Discipline or Basket of Discipline. Then there is the Sutta Pitaka, or the Collection of Discourses. Sutta means simply a thread. So it is the thread which goes through a whole sort of talk making it as it were a single uniform lecture if you like. So this is the sutta, the discourse, and the Sutta Pitaka contains five what are called nikayas. First of all comes the nikaya or collection of long discourses that I talked about, the Digha Nikaya. Then there is a collection of medium length discourses. Then there is a collection of discourses all on the same subject. That's the Samyutta Nikaya. Then there is a collection of discourses on first of all one thing, then two things, then three things like the Three Jewels, the Four Noble Truths, and so on. Each chapter going up one, "anga+uttara", so "one higher" it is called, the one higher collection, the collection that goes up one at a time, one to two, two to three, I think it goes up to eleven or twelve. Then there is a collection which is called the Khuddaka Nikaya. Khuddaka means small. It was small originally but it grew. Material that couldn't be included apparently under the other headings, including some very early and some very late material, was all included in this Khuddaka Nikaya which is sometimes called the miscellaneous nikaya. There are fourteen works in this, among them the Dhammapada, the Udana, the Itivuttaka, the Jatakas, the Apadanas, and this Sutta Nipata. So this is where the Sutta Nipata comes in the canon. It's one of the books of the Khuddaka Nikaya of the Sutta Pitaka of the Pali canon. And then you've got the third pitaka, the Abhidhamma Pitaka, which is regarded by most scholars as an elaboration by the later disciples of certain aspects of the Buddha's original teaching. That's in seven great books. So this is the Pali canon, sometimes called the Tripitaka, or Tipitaka, the "three baskets" or "three collections".

So is that pretty clear? have you got some idea now where you stand with regard to the Sutta Nipata?

Vimalamitra: It comes in the fourth book.

S: It comes in the second pitaka and in the fifth collection of that pitaka, the fifth nikaya, the Khuddaka Nikaya. You will find all these facts set out, you know, in quite a number of texts on Buddhism. But the main idea to get is the oral tradition becoming a literary tradition, yes, and that oral and literary tradition having varying linguistic forms, so that you get different recensions of the teaching and different versions of the teaching.[5]

Devamitra: What happened to the Apabhramsa and the Pisacha?

S: There were a few bits and pieces translated in the Chinese canon, but we don't seem to have any originals at all.

Devamitra: Is there any possibility that they were not actually written down?

S: They seem to have been written down, at least partly. There does seem to have been a general writing down from about the first century BC to the first century AD as literacy became more widespread and as writing lost its secular association. Some things were never written down. There is a belief - I refer to this in the Survey [A Survey of Buddhism, transcriber.]: the more exoteric the teaching the sooner it was written down, the more highly valued it was the less eager people were to write it down, so that a lot was written down later not because it was composed later but because it was regarded as more esoteric and therefore committed to writing much less eagerly.

Devamitra: So that would infer that the Mahayana sutras... (inaudible)

S: Were there as oral and spiritual tradition. (Devamitra: from the beginning?) at least in principle. This is what I have argued in the Survey, not necessarily in that particular form but certainly in principle, and the literary sacred writings were written to represent successive literary deposits from an existing oral tradition, but that can't be argued too strictly, as it were. No doubt some works were, in a sense, almost written, but there was a background of oral

tradition to everything.

Dick: Are there any schools or traditions which claim to still pass on teachings which still haven't been written down?

S: Oh yes, especially as regards the various Vajrayana traditions. I mean there are quite a number of spiritual practices which still haven't been written down but (are) very often variants upon, you know, well known practices. But this also raises a very important question: can anything in fact be written down? You see what I mean by this? Can a teaching be written down? Well we have all these scriptures, words of the Buddha, in languages written down, but the question arises can a teaching be written down? What is the value of the written, the place of the written, as distinct from the spoken word? What is the difference between the spoken word and the written word? This is a very important question.

Devamitra: The spoken word is directly individual.

S: The spoken word is direct to the individual. You always speak to a particular person or persons. But what value has that, what significance has that?[6]

Chintamani: You make the point in the Door of Liberation seminar that really all the scriptures are records of the precepts given to the disciples.

Ratnapani: So the words would be appropriate to that person or persons.

S: Yes, right.

Ratnapani: But they might be inappropriate to others.

S: The Buddha didn't as it were speak in a vacuum. He spoke in the context of a very concrete situation, a situation which consisted of himself and another person or persons, including any difficulties or problems that that other person or persons might have had. And the teaching, or at least the form of the teaching, the way in which he put things, was directed to that, directed to that particular person or persons and the particular situation in which they were. So all teaching is sort of specific teaching. There are teachings which are applicable to a large number of people, inasmuch as those people have a certain situation in common. But there are other teachings which are very specific to certain individuals and perhaps even only to them. This is why people find, reading through Buddhist texts - let's try and avoid the word scriptures - reading through the Buddhist texts, very often they feel that this does not in any way concern me at all, this is not aimed at me or directed to me or addressed to me. They might feel that on a certain occasion, but on some other occasion they might read through the same text, the same words, and feel that that really does apply to me, that really hits the nail right on the head so far as I am concerned at this particular moment. So it becomes very important to realize that the Buddha's teaching was originally a sort of oral communication, and that we're, as it were, when we read the scriptures, simply overhearing, overhearing what the Buddha says to other people. In a sense to us but to us only to the extent that we are in, or put ourselves in, the same situation as the people he was actually addressing. And sometimes we may be in that situation, with regard to a particular text, and at other times not. So sometimes it is relevant, sometimes it isn't. There may be certain portions of the Buddhist texts which are never relevant to us and will never be relevant. There may be other portions which are relevant to us for much of the time, or other portions that we find relevant on certain special occasions, when we are in certain special situations.

Vimalamitra: Then it is very much back to the words and teachings of the Buddha. He is expressing that state, that higher state, the Dharma itself.

S: It's not only that. It is not only a question of, say, listening to the words of the Buddha and then passing them on, repeating them, but one does try to understand, one does try to practise, so later generations of disciples not only had their [7] recollections of the words of the

Buddha; they also had their own experience from which they could speak, so that they can reproduce the words of the Buddha but out of their own experience. They can also say, "Well this is what the Buddha means," to make it clearer. And that when written down becomes commentary. And then of course you can have another generation who has, you know, to whom the words of the Buddha have been handed on, recollect the words of the Buddha, recollect the explanations of previous teachers, and then add from their own experience further comments. These are called tikas. You have got texts then commentary, which is ?pakasana, and then notes on commentaries, which are tikas, and then you have got anutikas, notes on notes, and in this way it goes on, in this way you build up a tradition and you build up a school. But where a school tends to harden and ossify is when it, when you reach a later generation which remembers all that has been said, or has read all that has been said, but has got no personal experience of it, to fall back upon explaining it to the next generation of disciples. It then becomes merely a scholastic and bookish tradition.

Dave: They can't speak from their own experience.

S: They can't speak from their own experience. And of course when the tradition has continued for many generations the situation may be very different, and some teachers may feel that the whole teaching needs to be recast, to be put in a different form. And then, relying to a greater or lesser extent on the existing tradition whether oral, oral or literary, and speaking very much from their own experience, they just give the teaching a new form according to the actual immediate needs of their disciples. They might, for instance, feel that the whole of the Abhidhamma is totally irrelevant to their disciples, so they might not talk about the Abhidhamma or the Abhidhamma teaching at all. They might talk directly from their own experience once again, just as the Buddha did, virtually ignoring the Buddhist tradition in a sense, though they are very much in touch with the essence of it through their own experience. This is what many of the Tantric teachers did and also many of the Zen masters: they just take from the existing tradition whatever they need for their own purposes. They don't try to sort of carry on and teach it, communicate it systematically as a whole. In any case, by this time there is so much of it. By this time there are so many scriptures, so many schools, so many commentaries. Are you going to expect the unfortunate disciple to have to master them all? No, you have to select a few texts, a few teachings, and present those to him in the light of your own experience and illuminated by the light of your own experience.

This is more or less what the Buddha did himself. He ignored all the existing religious traditions. He didn't quote from [8] the Vedas or anything of that sort. He spoke entirely from his own experience. So some later Buddhist teachers sometimes do that. This is why the Zen people say "A special transmission outside the scriptures". A transmission from what the Zen master has himself experienced without overt reference to the scriptures, though the essence of what he says is very much in accordance with the essence of the scriptures because the Zen master is also Enlightened or has a measure of Enlightenment. So you see the situation? You see how things develop and how they go on?

Chintamani: ... rehash ... going back to the Buddha's first words... a kind of re-commentary... (largely inaudible)

S: Are there any queries on all that before we actually come to the text?

Dick: In what way are the scriptures relevant to us today?

S: What does one mean by relevant?

Dick: Thinking in terms of a sort of living tradition, you know, Buddhism.

S: You mean what do we get out of them?

Dick: No, not so much that, but like the directness of the Zen master who re-communicates

the essence of the Dharma...

S: Well it is as I said. It is overhearing. You overhear the Buddha communicating, yes? And to the extent that you've got something in common with the disciple that the Buddha is communicating with, to that extent he communicates with you. But if you are too different from that disciple then nothing comes across to you. The Buddha, as it were, is not speaking to you. Also, in a way, the more individual the utterance the less relevant to other individuals, in a way, though sometimes, in a paradoxical fashion, the more individual the more relevant, or the more individual the more universal. The chances are that if, say, the Buddha, or any teacher, said something to a particular person which is absolutely specific to that person and his sort of specific needs, the chances are that that will ring a bell for a lot of other people too, provided there is no element in that which depends upon merely accidental things, like the accidents of the historical situation. So the more you speak to one person the more you speak to all. So when the Buddha is really able to speak to one person - and sometimes you can speak to a number of people as to one person - the more the Buddha is speaking to one person the more he is speaking to everybody. If you give a very generalized discourse which is more or less applicable to everybody, well, it doesn't apply very much to each individual, but if you speak, as it were, to one person well everybody gets quite a lot from it very often. It might even be that everyone feels that you are speaking [9] just to him, just to her.

Devamitra: Could you say it also the other way round? Like if somebody really sees something in themselves and is able to communicate that experience, like for instance Chintamani's article, especially the first one, which arose very much out of his experience but it applied to about every other man that I knew to certainly some extent.

S: Because the individual is as it were common. That in a sense is a contradiction in terms, but that is as it were the situation. When you speak for yourself you speak for all, if you speak truly for yourself. The more in contact you are with your own experience the more you are in contact with the experience of all, at least the experience of all who are roughly in the same situation as yourself. If you speak as a man then what you say will arouse an echo in the heart of every other man.

But I think, to get back to this really fundamental issue, it is important to remember that all the scriptures are a record of the Buddha's communication with other human beings, and one must also remember the purpose of that communication. Well, what was the purpose of that communication? Why did the Buddha bother to communicate? Why didn't he go on sitting under the bodhi tree, as he was if fact tempted to, apparently? Why did he speak? Why did he communicate? What was the purpose of the communication?

Devamitra: To try and communicate the Enlightenment experience.

S: But can one communicate the Enlightenment experience just like that? Well it depends on how prepared the other person is. It isn't that you literally communicate something in the sense of handing it over, but depending on the receptivity and sensitivity of the other person something of the Buddha himself was able to as it were rub off onto them. You mustn't think of the Buddha trying to communicate his Enlightenment experience as though that was something distinct from himself, as though that was something he had. No, the Enlightenment experience was not different from the Buddha himself. The Buddha was Enlightened. The Buddha was the Enlightened One. The Buddha was the Buddha. So in a sense he was trying to communicate himself. He wasn't trying to communicate anything, he was just trying to communicate. So in a sense there is no Dharma apart from the Buddha. The Buddha is the Dharma. There is no such thing as Buddhism, there is only Buddhists. So the Dharma arises and the scriptures arise out of the Buddha's attempts to communicate, out of the attempt of the Enlightened to communicate with the unenlightened. If the Enlightened are Enlightened what else can they communicate except their Enlightenment? They haven't got anything else. Just as when you're unenlightened, well, what else can you communicate except your unenlightenment. If you are ignorant what else can you communicate except your ignorance? If you are a mixture of the two in varying degrees, what else can you communicate [10]

except that mixture?

So the Buddha communicated because in a sense he couldn't help communicating. It was his nature to communicate. It's the nature of the Enlightenment experience to share itself with others. It's the nature of light to illumine. So he went about talking to people. Or not talking to people. Sometimes communicating in silence. That too he did.

So there isn't a Dharma separate from you which you have to communicate. You can only communicate yourself, and you communicate the Dharma to the extent you have absorbed the Dharma, become one with the Dharma. If you just learned it in the sense of, you know, reading it all up in a book, well, you can certainly pass on that information, but it is no more than that, a passing on of information, not a communicating, not a teaching, not a sharing of the Dharma.

Phil: So in a sense it is not being outside yourself alone.

S: In a sense not, nor nothing outside yourself that you can communicate. Not really communicate. Well you can hand somebody a copy of the telephone directory but that isn't communication. In the same way you can hand them a copy of the Buddhist scriptures, but that also isn't communication. You can only communicate yourself actually. When, you know, you hand somebody a copy of the scriptures and they read, well, they certainly get something out of that, you get something out of that when you read, but you get something out of second or third hand the Buddha's communication of himself to others or their communication of themselves to him.

Devamitra: Well then, for a practising Buddhist the most appropriate way of spreading the Dharma is by communicating yourself.

S: By communicating yourself and also on the condition that you are keeping up your own practice. You need not even talk about your practice, though very often it will come round to that. Someone may want to know what makes you the way that you are and then you will to just blush and say, "Well I meditate every day." Yes? It's like if someone sees you fine and healthy, you know, they might say, "Why are you so healthy?" and then you might say, "Well I do yoga every day," or "I go for a run every day," or whatever. In the same way if someone says, "Well you're always so peaceful, so happy, never seem to have any troubles, how is that?" Well then you can say, "Well it's because I meditate every day," or "I try to do this," or "I try to do that," and to give it all a sort of name, a collective identity. This is what we call Buddhism or what we call the Dharma, and this is what I am trying to practise. This is what I am trying to get into. But otherwise what one very often sees is, you know, some professor at a university with all the texts, all the dictionaries, all the [11] words, and he is completely remote from it in his life. He just passes on the information to his pupils. That's got nothing to do with the transmission of the Dharma.

And such people very often, you know, look down on the poor simpleton who actually believes in Buddhism and tries to practise it. So, also, there is the suggestion here that there is no Dharma without Sangha, because the Dharma is what arises when there is communication between two people, one of whom is Enlightened (and) the other not, or one of them is more Enlightened than the other as it were. So when you come into contact, when you communicate, when you clash even, well, the Dharma is the spark that is produced. And it isn't even anything very abstract, but if you really sincerely and earnestly try and communicate with some other person with complete honesty and authenticity, something genuine will arise out of that, and that is Dharma. You have communicated. Sometimes it is difficult to say whether you have communicated to him, or he has communicated to you. The flash sort of happens as it were when you come together, it's sort of sparked off simultaneously, so you can't even say who has communicated to whom.

Devamitra: Does that imply that a certain degree of self-transcendence is present?

S: Yes indeed. So also the communication of the Dharma in this sort of way is connected with non-ego, with anatta, with the Void. You can also say no communication without sunyata, in a sense, and therefore no communication without karuna, compassion.

Dick: It's relevant to the community... or something to be sorted out which is a need, or something which arises in response to the need...

S: Yes. So it is very important to get back to the oral communication, and the Dharma in the context of oral communication, or the Dharma as oral communication. When you are really trying to communicate with some other person on matters of what one might describe as of ultimate concern, then whatever arises between you is, one may say, Dharma; whatever sort of knowledge and understanding you arrive at out of that communication. You can't really communicate with another person without going outside yourself or going out of yourself to a certain extent. At the same time, paradoxically, you are more yourself than ever, because the Buddhist scriptures are not only a record of Buddhist texts, not only a record of what the Buddha said, but also what the Buddha did, you know. We mustn't forget that. Action also speaks, and when we come on now to the first sutta in this particular chapter we find that there is a description in part of what the Buddha did, or what the Buddha-to-be did, before the actual Enlightenment.

Devamitra: If two people really are in communication with one another, and to that extent have attained a certain degree of self-transcendence, that therefore must be a transcendental experience, yes? (S: Yes.)that would imply the arising of vipassana in that [12] situation, which would imply that that was shared by each of the two people in communication.

S: Yes.

Devamitra: They have the same experience... (S: All in a manner of speaking) ...in a manner (laughter) of speaking? Could you say a little more?

S: Well doesn't one know from one's own experience? I mean what happened?

Devamitra: Well I mean, for instance, I felt to be at times in very deep communication with somebody else. It's not that I'm accustomed to equate the idea of vipassana with that.

S: Well vipassana can arise in different situations. One mustn't associate vipassana only with formal meditation in the sense of sitting meditation, and many Zen disciples gained flashes of Enlightenment, or even Enlightenment itself, in the course of their inter-communication - sometimes quite violently - with their masters. So this is a situation - if it is of sufficient intensity - in which a flash of insight can arise, but also it can be very quickly and easily lost. I mean these are just as it were flashes of insight, very momentary glimpses, and if there is not a firm and solid basis, the sort of basis that in the context of meditation is provided by the samatha practice and experience, then, you know, those sparks or flashes of insight will not be retained at all. They may not even be remembered, not for very long. So you have got to have a solid basis as it were, to change the metaphor, in which they can take root and grow. But if you have had an experience, a real experience of this kind of insight arising, you know, in dependence upon or within the context of your communication with another person, and if there is a sort of solid basis within you of a high level positivity, whether deriving from your meditation or from other sources, then you will not lose that flash of insight, you will not forget it.

Devamitra: But it could say happen that in a situation that that would be... where that mutual self-transcendence was reached, that one person could have that basis and the other not, and therefore it would become a permanent thing for the one person but not for the other.

S: This is also possible. Just as, for instance, two people sitting and meditating in the same room: both get flashes of insight, one may have a very solid basis of samatha experience and is able to as it were retain and absorb the insight so that it does modify his whole being. The

other, though having in a sense that same experience, may not have that same basis of samatha experience and therefore may lose it.

Dave: Is samatha an experience?[13]

S: No, samatha means calm in the sense of the dhyana experiences, which are higher levels of consciousness, the four dhyanas especially, but which fall short of actual insight.

Chintamani: So extending this out into the spiritual career this perhaps corresponds to the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation, that the samatha might be transformation and...

S: No, No. It's the insight which sort of sparks off the Path of Transformation. The Path of Transformation is the working out of insight on different levels. But in order to get up to a sufficiently powerful insight that will have that practical effect you need the strong basis of samatha. You don't normally get up to an effective insight without a very strong backing as it were of the energy of the samatha.

Chintamani: So samatha, insight, then transformation?

S: Yes. So therefore you get for instance the sort of standard arrangement, sila the disciplinary foundation, then the samadhi in the sense of mundane samadhi, samatha. Then insight, then the extension of that insight into the different levels and aspects of one's being backed up of course by the energy deriving from the samatha, and in that way one's whole being eventually becomes transformed. So in that way, to put it technically, sila, samadhi, prajna, prajna, sila, samadhi.

Chintamani: And so on and so on and so on?

S: Yes, until the whole process is complete. In other words - you are familiar with this triad of sila, samadhi, prajna; ethics, meditation, and wisdom - if you follow the Path of Regular Steps first of all you practise ethics, you observe the precepts, where you purify yourself to some extent on the basis of an intellectual conviction, as it were, of what it is all about. Practise the precepts. Then on the basis of the practice of the precepts you practise meditation and samadhi, you experience the dhyana states, so you experience the states of superconsciousness, you have samatha experience. Then on the basis of that you develop wisdom, which is a higher or stronger form of insight. Then as a result of that insight all practical life starts being transformed. In other words your sila, your observance of the precepts, becomes natural and spontaneous, and then your whole mind is transformed and your meditation becomes, as it were, spontaneous and natural, a flow, not something you have to do. So in this way you have sila, samadhi, prajna, then prajna, sila, samadhi, or if you like sila, samadhi, prajna, sila, samadhi. So the first three comprise... all three can be, you know, each set of three can be subdivided into eight, giving you the Eightfold Path. And in this way you get the mundane Eightfold Path, which is [14] prior to your attainment of insight and the transcendental Eightfold Path, which is subsequent to your attainment of insight. Do you get this? I've dealt with it in the Survey actually, and there is a chart which we worked out some years ago and which should be available for all these correlations. Anyway, I hope we haven't got too far off, or too far away from the beaten track. May be we should come back now to the Sutta Nipata after that rather extensive introduction. I think you will find that it won't have been wasted. We will go round the circle reading a few verses at a time and then talking about them, commenting upon them. So can Ratnapani start, those first four lines.

The Going Forth. Pabbajja Sutta
Ananda: "I'll sing the going forth
Such as the seer went forth,
Such as, on studying,
He chose for going forth:"

S: Why Ananda?

Dick: Couldn't you call him the mouthpiece of tradition?

S: He is the mouthpiece of tradition. Ananda is supposed to be speaking. This is supposed to be Ananda's recollection. According to one account, after the Buddha's parinirvana the disciples - that is what we can only call (them) for the time being, the monk disciples - were gathered together at Rajagriha in a cave, and they recited the Buddha's teachings, and Ananda took the lead. Ananda said, "On such an such occasion this is what I heard the Buddha say." He recited it and they recited it after him, and in this way they learned from him whatever he knew. This is how all Buddhist suttas or sutras traditionally begin, with "evam me suttam" in Pali. That is "Thus have I heard." This is supposed to be Ananda, the mouthpiece of tradition, speaking. "This is what I have heard from the Buddha" or "This is what I have heard the Buddha say," indicating that it was originally an oral tradition. So Ananda is supposed to say:

"I'll sing the going forth
Such as the seer went forth,
Such as, on studying,
He chose for going forth:"

Now this word for going forth is pabbajja, and this is a very important word and a very important idea, in fact a very important institution, this going forth. Has anyone got any idea of what it is all about? Pabbajja, going forth.[15]

Dave: It is about the Buddha going forth, getting on his horse and riding out?

S: Yes, this is what we are concerned with here, and the Buddha is clearly observing a preexisting tradition or pattern, or doing something that others have done before. It is a well known sort of thing, and scholars have pointed out that in India about the time of the Buddha, in fact from before the time of the Buddha, you had this quite interesting social and spiritual phenomenon of people just leaving home and just wandering about, getting fed up with life at home and just going forth and just wandering from place to place, some of them looking for a teaching, looking for a new way of life, a different way of life from the old way. They usually depended upon alms. They went from place to place, they had begging bowls, and they just used to be supported by the local people wherever they went. So these were called those who had gone forth, pabbajitas. So pabbajja was this giving up of the home life, leaving your parents, leaving your wife if you had one, leaving your children if you had children, giving up your domestic responsibilities your civic obligations, cutting yourself off from your group, your tribe, your clan, your country, and just going forth; putting on a yellow robe, shaving off your hair, shaving off your beard, and going from place to place begging for food, living on alms, looking for a teacher, looking for a teaching, looking for a new way of life. So this was a very common phenomenon in the India of the Buddha's day, and had been apparently for at least a few generations. So you mustn't think in terms of people wanting to become monks. This completely falsifies the whole picture. What happened was that certain people, even large numbers of people, got fed up with living at home, got fed up with the domestic life, the traditional domestic way of life, and just left it all and went forth and wandered.

So this presupposes several things. To begin with it presupposes a certain set of economic circumstances which will enable them to do that. Northern India at that time must have been relatively prosperous to be able to support quite a few thousand of these people who were just wandering around, who were not productive in any way, who were not working, who were not producing food, just wandering around, looking for a new and different way of life. Looking for a teaching, or even professing a teaching and gathering followers, because some of these wanderers were better known than others and who had arrived at certain conclusions of their own and were gathering other wanderers, other people, who had gone forth around them, and becoming teachers and gurus and forming groups and forming sanghas. So this was the situation at the Buddha's time. And this is what we find the Buddha doing, and this is what Ananda is describing. In other words, in this chapter we go right back to the beginning,

the Buddha's leaving home, or the future Buddha's leaving home. This is where it all started. The Buddha getting fed up with his home life. The Buddha going forth as hundreds and thousands of other young men of his day and just before had gone forth, [16] disillusioned with life at home. So therefore Ananda says:

"I'll sing the going forth
Such as the seer went forth,
Such as, on studying,
He chose for going forth:"

Ananda says, "I'll sing". It is not exactly sing in the original. It is more like praise, hymn: "I'll hymn the going forth such as the seer went forth."

The word for seer is "cakkhuma", the one who possesses the eye, the one who sees, and sometimes it is said that the Buddha is the one who sees. This is a title given to the Buddha after his Enlightenment. The one who sees, the one who possesses the eye, the one, or the individual, with an eye, as if to suggest that others don't have eyes, others don't see. So why do you think this is? Why do you think the Buddha was given this particular title? Why was the Buddha said to see whereas others didn't see.

Vimalamitra: Because he had insight.

S: Because he had insight, he saw the truth as it were. So this is one of the titles of the Buddha. You will find - in Pali and Sanskrit - that there are many titles of the Buddha. We tend to use just a few: the Buddha, or Bhagavan, or Tathagata, but there are many others in the Pali and Sanskrit scriptures and this is one of them: cakkhuma, the one who sees, the one who possesses the eye, the eye of vision. So:

"I'll sing the going forth
Such as the seer went forth,
Such as, on studying,
he chose for going forth:"

So he studied the situation. It wasn't just a matter of impulse. Not only did he study the situation; he chose to go forth. It was the result of a deliberate decision. And then, why does he go forth? He gives his reasons, or is represented as giving his reasons. So let's read about those now, that whole passage. The Buddha is represented as saying what?[16(a)]

Phil: "Cramped is this life at home,
Dusty indeed its sphere;
Open the going forth!"
He saw this and went forth.
Gone forth, he wholly shunned
In body evil deeds,
And rid of wrongful talk,
He cleansed his way of life.
Came to Giribbaja
The Wakened One, besprent
With all the noble signs,
Seeking in Magadhan
Rajagaha for alms.
Him Bimbisara, in
His palace standing, saw
And marked those lofty signs,
And in this manner spake:

S: All right, let's go through that. So the next three lines give the Buddha's reflections. Why the Buddha left home, why he went forth, and he is represented as saying or reflecting:[17]

"Cramped is this life at home,
Dusty indeed its sphere;
Open the going forth!"

Let me refer a bit to the original text to get the full meaning of that. It is not only cramped it is bound, confined "is this life at home, Dusty indeed its sphere."

Dusty is "rajassa" which means... "rajas" is both dust and also passion, so sometimes it is translated as the dust of passion. So one could render this "life at home is dusty, the sphere of life at home is dusty" or "it is the abode of passion; it is where unskilful emotions are likely to arise."

"Open the going forth!"

The word for "open" is abbhokaso, which means "open air". It is not just open; it is the open air. So the Buddha says, in effect, that life at home is bound, limited, confined, it's dusty, you are liable to unskilful emotions if you stay there. But the going forth is just like the open air. The going forth is the open air, it's the open life. So you get the impression that the Buddha felt that going forth as a sort of stepping out of a narrower sphere into a much wider sphere, stepping out of a sort of claustrophobic situation into a situation which was infinitely expansive, so that you felt free. Do you get this sort of impression? Again it isn't becoming a monk in a narrow sort of ecclesiastical sense. So do you think this still holds good? Or what parallels are there in our own experience and in our own lives? Is the life at home still dusty, and what is the going forth? What does the going forth correspond to, or what corresponds to the going forth?

Vimalamitra: Leaving behind all those bonds and constrictions, and going forth open-minded into a new life.

S: And in practical terms?

Devamitra: Taking refuge.

S: Yes, Going for Refuge. This in a way comes later. This is the giving up of the past, the old, whereas the Going for Refuge means the finding and the acceptance or the commitment of oneself to the new, as it were, the New with a capital N. And this is why, to go ahead a bit, in existing Buddhist traditions, the novice monk - what is now called the novice monk, which really sounds completely wrong - is the one who has [18] gone forth. The so-called lower ordination is the ceremony of going forth, and the so-called higher ordination is the ceremony of the Going for Refuge and becoming a monk, as it is now called. But this doesn't correspond very well to the actual original tradition and experience. Nowadays you can become a little novice monk, you know, when you are quite young, even eight or nine, and you would be led by your mother from home by the hand into the monastery, handed over to the nice monks who would look after you, and your little head would be shaved and a little yellow robe would be put on, and you'd take the precepts of a samanera, and you'd become a novice monk; you'd become a sort of little Buddhist choirboy sometimes. So you see how far it has got away from the original tradition, which is the going forth. It is the going forth of an adult man, or young man, from all his previous ties, from the old claustrophobic situation, going into a much more free and open life, a much more expansive life, taking a bit of a risk. It is a bit of an adventure. So now it is just, you know, becoming a novice monk and a novice monk is called a samanera who has taken pabbajja, who has gone forth, and when he is older, when he is old enough, then he becomes a bhikkhu, he goes for Refuge as a bhikkhu, and he takes upon himself the obligations of the bhikkhu, he becomes a monk. But here again it has all become much too institutionalized, where the becoming a monk, the Going for Refuge, should represent a wholehearted commitment. But in the Buddhist East nowadays it very often isn't, because even the samanera, the lay person, goes for Refuge, but this is in a very formal and external manner indeed.

The term for becoming a bhikkhu, by the way, is upasampada, which means full acceptance into the sangha, into the spiritual community, which should mean in consequence upon your total commitment. So in our own tradition, in the FWBO and in the Western Buddhist Order, we have a sort of parallel here. This is why we have the private ordination and the public ordination. The private ordination represents your going forth: you are leaving the old behind. And the public ordination represents acceptance into the spiritual community, because having given up the old, you now commit yourself to the new. You see the connection? So in a sense, this is a rather distant parallel, in a sense when you take the private ordination you become a novice monk and when you take the public ordination you become a bhikkhu. Not in the current, later, as it were, ecclesiastical sense; when you take the private ordination, well, you give up the old, and then you take the public ordination: you publicly open and accept the new and are accepted into the spiritual community. Do you see the connection? You see the significance of it all? So in a way the term upasaka is a bit misleading. [At the time of this seminar, Order members were styled Upasakas and Upasikas, tr.] This is what it is in terms of present-day Buddhist tradition in the East, but actually it means a going back to the old days.

So what about this going forth? Do you think going forth must be literal? In the Buddha's case he literally walked out. [19] According to later traditions he left a beautiful palace and a whole bevy of damsels and, you know, a wife and child and all the rest of it, but he walked out. Whether he walked out of a palace, or whether he walked out of a mansion, he walked out quite literally and he started walking on his own two bare feet, eventually at least, the Indian roads. But how does that tie up with our experience? What about this literal going forth? Must it be literal?

Ratnapani: It is a bit chilly in this country, for a start, and you would die of starvation before very long as well.

S: But how can one be sure that one isn't just reading about it or thinking about it? How can one know one is really going forth?

Vimalamitra: If one really feels... (inaudible) and it starts to change your life.

S: But how would it change?

Devamitra: Well, your whole way of living would be different. I mean you might be in the same situation, your physical situation, but your lifestyle would be transformed.

S: But you couldn't probably remain in the same situation, you know, (for) very long, if you really started changing.

Chintamani: I'm just thinking that this is the sort of a little situation that one can repeat, because the tendency, I mean even in Buddhism, traditionally, is to become ossified, which means settling back at home again, and so it is a constant little revolution.

S: Going forth isn't something that you do once and for all and then it is done with and then you can settle down again afterwards; it is something, you know, that goes on all the time. It should be a continuing experience of going forth.

Ratnapani: You go forth and stay out and that means constant effort, to actually stay out.

S: Yes, this is the danger of becoming a monk in the orthodox sense, because you think you have gone forth because you are living in a monastery, wearing a yellow robe, and so you settle down in the monastery. And it becomes a sort of second home and you're not ready to go forth from that situation as you should be. So the going forth is really a continuing process, even though the original going forth, when you left behind all those long-standing ties, especially the ties with parents and home which are particularly strong, maybe that going forth will have even more significance and be even more of a revolution than all of [20] the subsequent goings forth. But still you must continue to go forth.

Aloka: Also remain open to change.

S: Yes. Not just change but to a more open situation. Something even more expanded and expanding.

Phil: Is the monastic life what the Buddha intended or did he imagine something more structural?

S: Again it depends what one means by monastic, but certainly in the modern sense one can say, well, there is nothing of monasticism in that sense in the Buddha's early teaching. You had these people who were wanderers, who had given up everything, and eventually they came in contact with the Buddha and his teaching. They committed themselves to that, they remained as wanderers, that remained their lifestyle, and within that lifestyle, within that context, they, you know, practised the precepts, meditation, tried to develop insight and do what they could for other people, communicated with one another, preserved the Buddha's teaching, handed them on, taught their disciples, but it really distorts the whole picture when we use words like monk, monastery, even religion, and so on. And this is what we are going to be getting into when we study, on a later study seminar, Trevor Ling's book "The Buddha". He goes into this in very great detail and in a very convincing sort of way. And we can see it from texts like the Sutta Nipata; we come very close to the actual situation as it was in the Buddha's own day, in the Buddha's own lifetime. So here you see the Buddha just going forth. And he reflects:

"Cramped is this life at home,
Dusty indeed its sphere;
Open the going forth!"

The going forth is just like the open air. I mean domestic life in England is bad enough, but probably in India it is even worse, because there are far more people living under the one roof. You might have twenty or thirty, you don't have any privacy, you can't be by yourself very easily, there are always people around you, always children, always babies, always women. It is very difficult to get away to a quiet corner unless you go outside. So to a man who wants to think, wants to reflect, wants a bit of time to himself, space to himself, it is a very claustrophobic situation. So when you make your mind up to leave, to walk out, you just find yourself in the open air; you know, just a few trees, and a few plants. You don't hear any people speaking, there are no babies crying, no women shouting, no cattle lowing. You think "good heavens, how free, how open, thank heavens, thank all the gods," you know, and you walk forth so happily. That in itself is like an enlightenment almost: just to walk out of it all, to feel so free.

And in those days in India [21] you could. India is a pretty big place and even now there are some wide open spaces in India, but then it was even more so, you just left behind your village, you heard the noises of the village growing fainter and fainter behind you. There is just the vast forest all around you and you are just following the path through the forest and there would be fruits growing on the trees. You would subsist in that way for a few days and you'd know that if you carried on walking you would come to another little village sooner or later, and they would feed you and you would walk on. So what a free life. You probably wouldn't pass anybody, maybe the odd wanderer like yourself, or maybe the odd tradesman just travelling from one village to another with his wares, maybe a king's representative, but you would hardly meet anybody, no main road, no high roads really worth speaking of, just these tracks through the jungle, just a few main roads connecting the big cities, but you'd probably avoid those, and you would just have the forest all around you. The whole of northern India practically was covered with forest called the Great Forest, the Mahabuna, so you just walked out into that. You become completely free, just leaving everything behind. So that's the sort of experience and this is the sort of experience that the Buddha had.

Dave: Why do you think it is that the wandering ascetics are looked up to in India, and yet tramps in this country are looked down on.

S: Well, tramps in India are looked down on too, but people are very tolerant. What nowadays are called sadhus in India - which correspond to the people who have gone forth though they are Hindu and not Buddhist - there are all sorts. Some are simply beggars, no better than tramps, but others may be highly spiritual people. So the Indians respect those who have gone forth for, as it were, spiritual reasons, and he also thinks that you mustn't judge others. This chap may look like a tramp to you, but you don't know, he may be a great yogi. Great yogis are sometimes very unconventional in their behaviour. People know this, so even though a wanderer, even though a sadhu, may look a real scamp people are never quite sure - it may be some really holy man. We don't know so give him the benefit of the doubt. This is their usual attitude. Or they may say, "Well it takes all sorts to make a world, we can spare a bit of food. If he is a rascal what does it matter? Who does he harm? He only harms himself, never mind. They don't feel all indignant or all outraged or want to call the police (laughter) or prosecute him. They just don't bother all that much. "Well bad sadhus? That's the price we have to pay for good sadhus, never mind, it doesn't matter." They are very tolerant usually in this sort of way. So if in this country we had had traditionally, you know, quite holy men, friars and others going around, and people looked up to them, then maybe we would tolerate the tramps more than we do. You know, tolerate the tramps for the sake of the really holy wanderers.[22]

Vimalamitra: Perhaps in medieval England this country was very much like India.

S: It could have been, especially when the friars came, though they speedily got themselves a rather bad reputation and were unfortunately, you know, abolished by King Henry VIII. But you notice the transition here? I think this is the important thing, from a narrow confined situation to the open unconfined situation. It is very important to keep that sense and that feeling all the time, of going to a more and more open situation, into a wider and wider context. We must be very careful not to lose that, especially when we get involved with the so-called organizational activities. You can have your sense of openness and expansion even in the midst of, you know, activity, but you must be very careful you don't gradually, with the best of intentions, sort of tie yourself down in a negative way. This is quite a distinct thing from accepting in a positive spirit a certain responsibility and discharging that faithfully over a number of years. You can do that and, you know, still keep your sense of expansion, but you must be careful to feel that you don't... careful that you don't feel that you are trapped in that situation even though objectively it is quite a good one for you to be in. You must retain your inner sense of freedom and expansion at least.

Vimalamitra: What happens if you do find yourself in that situation?

S: Well, you have to go forth in one way or another, either externally or internally or both.

Dick: Or you use the external to spark off the internal.

S: Yes, but if it is a situation, you know, the more expanded situation into which you walked or into which you'd gone forth voluntarily, if you start finding that or seem to start finding that a bit constricting, then you must ask yourself how has it all come about? Is there not something in you which is making you feel that? You know, irrespective of the nature of the situation objectively. But it important to maintain this sense of, you know, going forth, the widening perspective.

Chintamani: Perhaps in this context of leaving home for us... be assured of success and leaving home is when you don't know whether you are going to be successful or not.

S: And that too. You are able to leave home because you feel confident within yourself. You are self-dependent. You are not dependent on the support that you usually get from home and all that that represents.

Devamitra: I would have thought that a very good balance to feeling constricted in a situation where you have, say, a number of responsibilities is just to insist and [23] make sure that you do have, you know, your annual solitary retreat... or however frequently that is, whether for a

month, two months, three months, or however... I'm sure...

S: That's true, yes, because that again is a going forth. I have often said that it is a very good sort of combination to have the periodic solitary retreat, or even just a retreat with a few other people alternating with activity and responsibility within the context of a centre or community and so on. I mean in this country externally you can't sort of go forth indefinitely. You have to come back, but you come back not into as it were the preexisting situation but you come back into a situation which you are helping to create, because the centre or community where you are, you know, within which you function, should in itself be an expanding thing in all senses. You are creating that so it is part of your process of expansion, but none the less you do need to go forth even from that from time to time and be perhaps on your own or with just a very few very like-minded people.

Vimalamitra: I've noticed that people are a bit cautious about taking a solitary retreat. It is almost like they have got so much to do that they haven't got the time to go and be on their own.

S: I think that one has to be very careful about that. If one really objectively weighs up the situation and comes to the conclusion that you cannot be spared, well fair enough, but if you have got so involved with organizational things that almost instinctively you shrink from the idea of a solitary retreat, then you should be very, very careful. Sometimes your good friends need to get together and almost forcibly relieve you of your responsibilities and pack you off on a solitary retreat and see that you stay there for a month or two, if not longer.

Phil: The jungle that the wanderers went forth into, was it very dangerous, you know, full of lions and tigers?

S: It seems not to have been all that dangerous. There is a belief or tradition that, you know, wild animals don't harm holy men. You never hear... I don't off hand recollect any instance in the Pali scriptures of any monk being attacked.

Ratnapani: Surely in the Udana there is a "nearly become a disciple" I think, and he got killed by a bull or something.

S: That's right, a bull, a domestic animal, an animal that has some association with men. But you don't hear of a monk being attacked by a lion. But there were lions around, or tigers, or rhinoceroses. They had all these beasts, or even snakes. It is a bit odd. But you notice here, and I want to emphasize this point, how far we are from a sort of formal "becoming a monk". It is a going forth. It is a going forth from the narrower to the [24] wider context. It is a process that we have to keep up all the time. We must have that sense of expansion all the time because it isn't easy to reconcile that sometimes with, as it were, organizational responsibility. But if one does have a periodic solitary retreat then one can get along pretty well, and then one can return to the organizational situation with renewed zest and enthusiasm and make that situation itself expansive. If you are, as it were, trapped within it indefinitely it becomes less and less expansive, you become less and less expansive, and you can, you know, make that situation less and less expansive. You can less and less make it expansive. You see what I mean?

So what did the Buddha, or the future Buddha, do once he had gone forth? Gone forth, or having gone forth, "he wholly shunned in body evil deeds".

And especially for the one who has gone forth the thing to be stressed above all is not doing harm to other living beings - in other words the first precept.

"he wholly shunned in body evil deeds,"

He was not a source of harm or violence to any other living being, nor of course did he take anything that didn't belong to him. And of course the one who has gone forth goes forth on

his own. He doesn't take his wife and children with him. Occasionally people did, there are one or two references, but only one or two references, in the Pali scriptures, to married pabbajitas, but this was of course before the Buddha's time and not within the context of the Buddha's disciples. The Buddha apparently did not permit that. You went forth on your own and you left your wife and family behind. If she wanted to go forth she could, but on her own and in a different direction. (laughter) So:

"Gone forth, he wholly shunned
In body evil deeds,
And rid of wrongful talk,
He cleansed his way of life."

This is quite important: "He cleansed his way of life." And this is a literal translation, *ajivam parisodhayi* - he cleansed his way of life, [25] he purified his lifestyle - which harks back to what we were saying a little while ago about a change in lifestyle. But why do you think the Buddha, or the future Buddha, or anyone who goes forth, hadn't done this before?

"Gone forth, he wholly shunned
In body evil deeds,"

Why didn't he shun evil deeds before? Did he have to go forth in order to be able to shun evil deeds?

Vimalamitra: It is much easier when you are starting again.

S: It is as though the ordinary secular way of life inevitably involves you in certain evil deeds or wrongful talk, and you can only shun those by disassociating yourself from the whole situation.

Devamitra: But it also suggests a certain lack of vision too, and it also suggests a certain lack of vision in a previous situation.

S: Yes, right. You'd no inspiration to shun those things, as it were. No reason.

Devamitra: And until that arises then there is nothing to push you.

S: You just feel yourself stagnating. Though at the same time you may be very busy but, you know, in human terms, terms of the higher evolution, in spiritual terms, you are stagnating. So:

"Gone forth, he wholly shunned
In body evil deeds,"

At last he had the opportunity to stop doing unskillful things that he had never been happy with and he was able to get rid of wrongful talk. At home it was always talk about this, talk about that, you know, all sorts of worldly talk about everyday, practical, mundane matters, all sorts of useless talk and idle gossip. So he was rid of all that. He cleansed his way of life so one can say. This really is the consequence of going forth: you are able to cleanse your way of life. And in a way this is the proof that you have gone forth: your way of life is cleansed, you don't do harm to other people, you don't do harm to other living beings, you don't misappropriate, you don't waste your time in idle talk, you cleanse your whole way of life. And of course, in the case of the one who had gone forth in the Buddha's day, he was not allowed to - I won't say gain his livelihood, it is not quite like that - but he wasn't allowed to support himself in certain ignoble ways. For instance, some wanderers in the Buddha's day, since they were not living at home and cultivating their own fields for instance, or working in any other way of that kind, they resorted to palmistry [26] and astrology, and as they passed through the villages they just made a bit of money in that way and in that way supported themselves, so this is regarded as improper by the Buddha for one who has gone forth. So in

the modern context if one goes forth very often one will still need to support oneself. So if one does that then it must be strictly in accordance with right livelihood. So you can still be following right livelihood and even be supporting yourself and be gone forth at the same time. But that means a very careful choice of means of livelihood. And this is why, you know, apparently in the Friends we are giving a lot of attention to this question of livelihood so that as many people as possible can be, as it were, employed within the Friends on various projects and be provided with the right means of livelihood or means of right livelihood, preferably part-time so as to leave them time for quite a few other things as well. So:

"Gone forth, he wholly shunned
In body evil deeds,
And rid of wrongful talk,
He cleansed his way of life."

So the going forth produces all these changes. It gives you an opportunity to revolutionize your whole way of life. This is what it means. You can make a fresh start, make a fresh pattern, a new pattern, be a new man living in a new kind of way, though you haven't yet committed yourself. But you're free to commit yourself.

(408) Came to Giribbaja
The Wakened One, besprent
With all the noble signs,
Seeking in Magadhan
Rajagaha for alms.

(409) Him Bimbisara, in
His palace standing, saw
And marked those lofty signs,
And in this manner spake:

This seems to introduce us to a little bit of ancient Indian geography. Have you any idea where Magadhan was? Have you any idea where the Buddha was born? This will come in towards the end of the chapter but let us mention it now.

Voice: Nepal.

S: Yes, in what is now Nepal - actually southern Nepal - very near the Indo-Nepalese border at the place called Lumbini. So that was within Sakya territory, so he was born [27] among the Sakyas at the foot of the Himalayas, and the Sakyans at that time seem to have acknowledged the overlordship of the kingdom of Kosala which occupied roughly north-western India up as far as Delhi. And the kingdom of Magadhan was in north-eastern India, so you got these two great kingdoms in north-western and north-eastern India practically side by side, and in the Buddha's day the great political question was which one was going to swallow up the other. Each was becoming more and more powerful, each was absorbing smaller kingdoms and republics, and Magadhan at that time was ruled by Bimbisara and Kosala was ruled by Pasenajit. And after his Enlightenment the Buddha was in contact with both of these rulers. Both, according to Buddhist tradition, became his disciples, but Magadhan was the more important of the two - or at least eventually became the more important of the two - and eventually the Magadhan empire as it became swallowed up Kosala and all the other states and kingdoms, and by the time of Chandragupta and Ashoka the Magadhan empire extended practically over the entire length and breadth of India.

Vimalamitra: So that's what Ashoka was the king of, Magadha?

S: Yes. He extended the frontiers even further by his conquest of Kalinga, but that of course you may remember upset him very, very much, and as a result of that experience and seeing all that slaughter, and repenting, he became a Buddhist, or at least a more sincere Buddhist than he had been before. So that was the situation. Here you have the Buddha leaving home, that is, leaving his family home among the Sakyans, coming down from the foothills of the

Himalayas or from the plains at the foot of the Himalayas, coming down south-east into the kingdom of Magadhan and wandering from place to place; we are not given all the details. Elsewhere in the scriptures we are given the details, you know, what happened to him during those years, but this text comes straight on to his arriving at Rajagaha. Rajagaha was then the capital of Magadhan. So in other words the Buddha has come down from his country, he has left his own country. He is now in a foreign country really. He is in the kingdom of Magadhan. He has come to the capital which is Rajagaha as it is now known. It is a very interesting place. I have been there a number of times. I have described it by the way towards the end of my memoirs. I expect some of you have read that description. There is this great circle of hills with the old city of Rajagaha, or what is now the ruins of the old city in the middle now overgrown with jungle. But in the Buddha's day that whole area was filled with a very busy and popular city and the royal capital was there but it was moved to Patna. The Buddha very often after his Enlightenment visited Rajagaha, and he sometimes used to stay up on these mountain peaks, especially on the Vulture's Peak, where he is supposed to have taught many disciples, and he had another vihara just outside the south gate which was the famous Bamboo Grove vihara, the Veluvana vihara. He paid many visits. This [28] apparently is his first visit. So:

"Came to Giribbaja." That is one of the peaks of, or rather mountains surrounding, Rajagaha. "Came... the Wakened One." He is called the Wakened One in anticipation because he hasn't yet gained Enlightenment. "... besprent with all the noble signs." What are these noble signs? Do you know about these?

Voice: There are thirty-two.

S: Yes. Later traditions draw up a list, but they are the signs of a remarkable man, a man who may go in a worldly or in a spiritual direction, these marks or signs. The list is quite a strange assortment by this time. These marks or signs show that he is a very extraordinary man, a mahapurisa, a great man. A superman. He is quite different from other people. What do you think this is all about? One can't take these signs literally, in fact it is quite clear from some of the texts that the Buddha didn't literally have all of these. For instance, elongated ear lobes, webbed fingers, and quite strange things of that sort. So what do you think this tries to convey? No one knows how it all started. There is no record in non-Buddhistic literature of these signs.

Voice: (inaudible)

S: It is something of that kind, that there is something quite unusual, quite extraordinary about him that later tradition tried to particularize in this list, which has been got from heaven knows where, as signs of the superman. They are called mahapurisa laksana, signs of the mahapurisa, which is quite literally the superman. So the Buddha was recognized as a superman, and the superman could either turn in the worldly direction and become a great ruler, or in the spiritual direction and become an Enlightened being, though the potentiality for both was there. So anyone, any intelligent person, seeing the Buddha before even his Enlightenment, could see here is an extraordinary man. And Bimbisara, the king of Magadhan, then a young man about the same age as the Buddha, was by all accounts a very extraordinary person himself. So the text says that when the future Buddha came to Giribbaja - came to these hills surrounding Rajagaha, covered with all these noble signs and looking very much the superman - when he came to the kingdom of Magadhan, when he came to the city of Rajagaha for alms, Bimbisara standing in his palace saw him, saw those noble characteristics, saw those signs as it were of the superman, and then he spoke. So you can imagine the scene. The [29] Buddha comes in through the gate. As I mentioned Rajagaha is surrounded by a circle of hills and there is an entrance into the area within these hills through the openings between the different ranges and there were gates there and there were guards there. So in the Buddha comes, walking along the streets begging, and apparently Bimbisara's palace was in the middle of the town, in the middle of the city, he must have been standing at a veranda or at an open window and looking out, well perhaps he often did that, just looked out to see what everyone was doing and he saw this strange ascetic, this strange gone forth

figure just going around for alms from door to door, and he at once noticed that there was something extraordinary about him. He wasn't an ordinary person. So this is the sort of scene one must imagine. So what does he say? He says to the people surrounding him.

(410) Bimbisara: "Note ye, good sirs this man,
His beauty, majesty,
How fair and full his gait!
But plough's length far he looks
(411) With gaze cast down, alert;
Not from low clan his like!
King's messengers send out
And see where goes the monk."

S: Let's just consider that bit. "Note ye, good sirs, this man." He says to those around him, "Just observe that man." So in view of these subsequent lists of characteristics it is rather interesting what points Bimbisara draws attention to. First of all his beauty. I wonder what the word for beauty here is. Let's just ... abhirupo, yes, of superior form, or one could say beautiful, of lofty form. So this is the first thing that Bimbisara notices, his physical perfection and then majesty. What do you think majesty conveys? Brahma in Pali.

Voice: His air of nobility.

S: His air of nobility and dignity. "How fair and full his gait!" Just the way he walks, look! He walks with a sort of majestic pace, "But plough's length far he looks with gaze cast down, alert." [30] This is considered very proper for those who have gone forth. Even now in Buddhist countries bhikkhus very often, as it were, imitate this sometimes in an artificial way. You are supposed when you're walking not to look from side to side, just fix your eyes just six or seven feet in front of you on the ground, but at the same time the Buddha or the future Buddha looks alert. He doesn't - I mean just because he is keeping his eyes down - doesn't look downcast or depressed. He is alert at the same time. So Bimbisara clearly impressed by this figure. He says, "Look, look at that man! I mean look how handsome he is, how majestic he is. Look at the way he walks, so noble, so majestic, and look how he keeps his eyes down, at the same time he is alert he is wide awake."

Then what does he say? "Not from low clan his like!" He seems to come from a very superior family. Seems to belong to a noble family. "King's messengers send out and see where goes the monk. Follow him, see where he goes!" The word he uses is bhikkhu, which means one who lives upon alms. It doesn't mean monk in the modern Western sense. So this is something that is mentioned quite often in the Pali texts, the Buddha's physical appearance. The Buddha is constantly referred to as extremely handsome, well spoken, well built, athletic, dignified, majestic. You get all of these qualities brought out in the traditional figure of the Buddha - the Buddha image. Do you think that this has got any particular significance? The Buddha was apparently, the historical Buddha, was a person of this kind.

Vimalamitra: It suggests that he was a very healthy human being.

S: Yes, right. It very much suggests that. This as I said is mentioned throughout the Pali scriptures. He is described, even by his enemies, as tall, well built, self-confident, powerful, even handsome, dignified, measured in his speech, et cetera, all these sort of qualities, as though, as you said, the Buddha was a healthy human being to begin with, even a perfect human being on the ordinary human level, before there was even any question of Enlightenment, in a way almost a sort of classical figure, classical in the Greek sense.

Chintamani: I also get this idea of a principle reflecting itself in the physical appearance.

S: Yes. You get the spiritual perfection, or at least the incipient spiritual perfection, as it were reflecting itself on the physical level. This is quite important. I had a friend in Bombay many years ago who was quite well known, and when I knew him he was quite well known as a

religious teacher, he had a little group of his own, and he told me how it all started. It is very interesting. He started as a body builder, believe it or not. [31] He was a Parsi by birth. Parsi means a follower of the Zoroastrian religion. There was a Parsi minority in Bombay. They had all emigrated from Persia centuries ago. And as a young man, as an adolescent, he was intensely interested in body building and weight lifting and weight training. He did this practically all the time and he became very famous in Bombay. He was known as the Parsi Apollo because by the time he was eighteen, nineteen, or twenty he had such a magnificent figure, and he used to give exhibitions of classical poses on the stage and things of this sort, and he was proud of his beautiful physique, et cetera. So he told me that one day he thought to himself "Why stop with the body?" It is not just a question of physique, that's all right but why stop there? And he started studying medicine. He thought it is not only important to have a handsome well-built body; you've got to be healthy. And he wasn't attracted by allopathy. He took up naturopathy and he studied anatomy, physiology, and all the rest of it on his own and eventually became a naturopathic doctor, and a quite famous doctor. He was very well known throughout India and was one of Mahatma Gandhi's two doctors, and he managed several of Mahatma Gandhi's fasts. He has a nature cure clinic in Poona where Mahatma Gandhi always used to stay when he was in that area and where I stayed myself a number of times. So he became a famous nature cure doctor. Then he thought, "Well this isn't enough. What about - in his terminology - the soul, what about the spirit?" So he took up yoga, he took up meditation, and eventually became a yogi, and even that wasn't enough, and he used to go even deeper and deeper into things, and by the time I met him he wasn't even satisfied with being a yogi. He was very interested in Buddhism, especially sunyata and the Perfection of Wisdom. He always wanted to go a bit beyond as it were, and so he told me that, "This was my quest, from physical perfection to mental and emotional perfection, to spiritual perfection." This is how it all started. Again by the time I knew him he was an enormous bloated figure and he was no longer the Parsi Apollo, he was about fifty-five to sixty when I knew him and I knew him over a number of years. I always used to stay with him in Bombay and there would be framed photographs of himself as the Parsi Apollo in his younger days. His wife would sometimes show me these and he - you would never recognize the same man - he said, well, "I don't care about the physical side of things any more; I'm completely into the spiritual side." I personally think that that is a bit of a mistake. He took no exercise. He just sat on his seat the whole day getting stouter and stouter and talking about yoga and meditation, and giving discourses and so on. Now he is in Delhi incidentally. I still hear from him sometimes. But it is quite interesting this beginning of physical perfection then going on gradually to the mental and even the spiritual perfection. It is not that you leave the one behind and neglect it when you go on to the next in the scale, or up the scale as it were. I think ideally one should be as perfect as possible on every level. So this is [32] why I say, within the context of the Friends, I don't regard it as unspiritual if one is devoted to developing a measure of physical perfection or developing one's physical health and strength. I think this is, as it were, a sort of image, a sort of reflection, or should be a sort of image or reflection, of a higher kind of perfection, and it bodies it forth on that particular level. So I think by all means devote some time, some energy, to these things.

I think it is also good, even from a spiritual point of view, because if you are into things like physical culture, and physical activity, even sports, it takes a lot of pressure off the emotional side, especially your more neurotic emotional side. You notice that people who are never into anything physical or into sports or games or anything of that sort have usually got far more mental and emotional problems than those who aren't. Those who are physically healthy, other factors being equal, tend to be mentally and emotionally healthy too. I think that is quite important. So it is maybe no accident really that the Buddha did have this sort of appearance. That he was handsome, that he did have a good physique, was dignified, he did impress the people. It is very fortunate for Buddhism in a way, very fortunate for later Buddhists that the Buddha was originally of this kind, that there was this image of perfection reflected even at the physical level. All right, let's read on.

(412) Bidden, those messengers
Pursued hard after him:
"Where will he go?" they thought,

"Where will his dwelling be?"
(413) Faring from house to house,
Sense-warded, well restrained,
Swiftly he filled his bowl,
Mindful and self-possessed.
(414) His alms-round made, the sage
Turned from the city and
Ascended Pandava,
Here would his dwelling be.
(415) They saw him enter there,
Those messengers, and paused;
And one unto the king
Returned, relating thus:

S: Yes. So "Bidden, those messengers pursued hard after him." The king's messengers followed after the future Buddha as he fared from house to house in [33] quest of alms. "sense-warded". What do you think "sense-warded" means? Or guarding his senses?

Voice: Mindful?

S: Mindful with regard to the senses? What does that mean?

Voice: Guarding the gates of the senses?

S: Guarding the gates of the senses. Well what does that mean?

Aloka: Being aware of what he is doing.

S: Not only that. It means mindful with regard to the sense impressions that are coming in so that they don't take you off your guard and cause you just to react involuntarily.

Voice: In a sense self-possessed.

S: Self-possessed. Yes. For instance, all the time impressions are coming in from the outside world, but usually we react to them automatically, we just react. But if you are mindful you experience certain sensations and you decide whether to react to them or not. So if you decide, it isn't a reaction in the ordinary sense, but usually we don't decide because we are not mindful. So one is supposed to be mindful of all the impressions coming in through the eye, impressions coming in through the ear, in other words sight and sounds, and as it were just stop and ask yourself, well, you know, am I going to react or not? Is it proper to react? Is it skilful to react? Like someone, say, puts a glass of beer in front of you, well, your hand sort of automatically goes out. You don't think, and you drink it. But if you're mindful you think, well, here is a glass of beer, you know, you see the glass of beer, so is it the skilful thing to do to drink it or not to drink it? You don't automatically drink it because it is there.

Vimalamitra: It is a bit like that at meal times at Sukhavati. You hear the bell and... (laughter)

S: Well, we know all about ringing bells and salivating dogs don't we? (laughter) But it mustn't be that you see. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't eat. Or it doesn't mean that you have got to become self conscious about it, but just be a bit mindful. I mean just watch the sensations as they come, let there be a little break, a little interval. Don't react immediately because that will mean automatic reflex action or reaction, and we are being bombarded with these sorts of impressions all the time. So we just have to sort of allow ourselves to step back from them and as it were decide which ones we are going to let through, you know, which ones we are going to react to or rather respond to [34] and which we are not, which we are going to keep out. Because in the Buddha's day it was much easier than it is nowadays, especially for the one who had gone forth. Because there is not much harm in the blue sky, white clouds, and the green trees, but if you are living in the city and every step there is, you

know, advertisements for this and advertisements for that, well, it is a very different sort of situation; you need to practise this guarding of the senses very much more. If you could possibly walk through the streets of London with your gaze fixed on the ground six feet ahead of you it probably would be a very useful thing to do. Probably be even more useful to wear blinkers like a horse (laughter) and shut out, you know, all the impressions. Sometimes we are over fed with impressions aren't we? So many of them are coming in all the time, whereas in the country it is a bit different. Well you do get impressions but they are much more of a sameness and they are much calmer, they change less rapidly so there is less stimulation therefore less craving. So this is warding the senses, or guarding the gates of the senses as it is also called. Each sense is supposed to be like a gate, and you're supposed to stand at the side of this gate and watch who comes in or who wants to come in. Not just to allow everyone in, not allow every sense impression to enter into the mind and affect it. Keep it at a distance. Just observe it and not react to it. Just see it or hear it or smell it as the case may be but don't necessarily react. Even sort of accustom yourself to not reacting at all sometimes.

Chintamani: That is very difficult to, to... if an emotion comes up in response to something, automatically it is not something one can rationalize and say, "I don't feel that," because it is there.

S: But who says you shouldn't feel it, or says that you say that you don't feel it? You just have to acknowledge that it is there but you don't act upon it.

Chintamani: Well yes, but it is still there.

S: If it is there, I suppose it is there, but the important thing is as it were don't look, if looking is going to give rise to a certain experience and you are going to respond to that automatically in a certain way which is unskilful. Sometimes you just have to avoid those sorts of situations. If you are trying to give up smoking, well, avoid all those ads for this brand and that brand of cigarette, otherwise you are constantly reminded of it, which you just cannot allow our self to be.

So, "Sense-warded, well restrained, swiftly he filled his bowl." What does that suggest? "Swiftly he filled his bowl." [35]

Ratnapani: People responded to him.

S: People responded to him. Yes. Maybe he requested, maybe he didn't. The Buddhists later on, and the Buddha himself at this stage, they just stood there and everybody knew what they were there for. But swiftly, yes, I mean, people were very pleased to give to him.

Mindful and self-possessed.
(414) His alms-round made, the sage
Turned from the city and
Ascended Pandava,

He started climbing up the Pandava Hill, one of the hills of the ranges encircling the city. "Here would his dwelling be." This was the Buddha's practice apparently, before as well as after his Enlightenment. He didn't sit down in the city and finish off his meal. Once he had made his almsround, once he had collected his food, once he had collected enough, he made his way out of the city. Sometimes he would go to a nearby mango grove or sometimes, as here, he would climb up into the surrounding hills. He ascended Pandava.

Here would his dwelling be.
They saw him enter there,
(415) Those messengers, and paused;
And unto the king
Returned, relating thus

So they followed the Buddha, tracked him, and one of them goes back to tell the king where he is. The king apparently is very interested by this wanderer who has suddenly appeared. No doubt he has attracted his particular attention. So he wants to know what he is doing and where he is gone so the men have returned to tell him that.

I think we had better stop there because time is up. Or at least spend a few more minutes just going over perhaps general points. So what sort of impression do you get so far? Do you get any definite impression from the text so far?

Voice: It is a bit archaic.

S: It is a bit archaic. Actually the Pali language is a bit archaic.

Ratnapani: It would have this sort of flavour in the Pali then?

S: Oh yes, yes, perhaps not quite in the same way. The "thees" and "thous" are not [36] archaic in quite the same way as the Pali equivalents are archaic, but it is an archaic language in parts, more archaic than most of the other Pali texts. It is a richer language, more varied, flexible. So you have got this picture of the Buddha, this going forth and all that implies, and travelling, travelling through the great forest to the kingdom of Magadhan and to Rajagaha and going for alms, attracting the attention of the king to such an extent that the king sends messengers just to track the Buddha, to follow him and tell him, the king, where the Buddha is. So even in those days before his Enlightenment he must have been quite an impressive figure. We don't know how old he was since many texts say that he was 29 when he left home, but as we will see later on the suggestion is that he is even younger than that because he is referred to as a youth and in the prime of life which suggests, almost, his early twenties, especially in India. So he may not have left it as late as 29 before going forth. He may have gone forth much earlier than that.

Ratnapani: Leaving a wife and was it one child?

S: One child.

Ratnapani: This would suggest that he would have had more than one child before 29.

S: Yes, right.

Voice: He married at sixteen.

S: According to some accounts, yes, sixteen. So he could have gone forth even before he was 20, that is quite possible, though later tradition does say 29, or there is one quite old text which does say 29, but we don't really know. I mean texts like this point to a much younger age. What do you think the important points are that have emerged this morning so far?

Ratnapani: The simple spirit in which it was done so far has come across. The simplicity of this, the authenticity as I can judge it, and the almost uncomplicatedness of it all.

S: There is no question of an ordination or becoming a novice. You just go forth. You become a pabbajita, one who has gone forth.

Ratnapani: You don't go through ?Arika, Gestalt, drugs, women, and all the rest of it beforehand it would seem.

S: Well the Buddha, according to some accounts, had gone through quite a lot, including those four sights and various mansions and singing and dancing girls et cetera before he went forth. But the very early accounts just, you know, represent him as going forth [37] from a very comfortable upper-class sort of life. You know, quite comfortable and happy on the family level and on the social and political level too, economic level, quite well to do,

prosperous, had everything, but wasn't satisfied by that, didn't find it enough, found it rather stuffy, rather claustrophobic, so went forth. In later accounts they represent him as giving up a great kingdom, an empire, but that is just later poetic elaboration, but quite clearly he went forth from what was in those days considerable prosperity. He had, in ordinary human terms, everything; had social position and happy family life, had friends, relations, had a future politically. Father was the head of the community.

Ratnapani: In fact it would seem that it could have gone either way, either to worldly life or to the spiritual.

S: It could have gone either way. This is something that Trevor Ling points out. You know, it is a very fine sort of distinction. You can go either this way or that, especially when you are young. Your energy can go quite easily into quite a successful worldly life or into a spiritual life, which is ultimately much more satisfying. So in the case of a highly gifted person like the Buddha, well, it could be the alternatives of becoming a great ruler or of becoming a Buddha. Maybe this is one of the reasons why Bimbisara maybe felt a sort of an affinity with the Buddha. He had made his choice in a way, or perhaps in a way he hadn't, perhaps he hadn't seen the other alternative, but perhaps there was some really great potentiality there. Maybe he was a man, you know, not unlike the Buddha in a way. He was a very commanding personality, a very noble person, a very good king, very conscientious, very honourable. This all comes out in, you know, other Pali texts, and the Buddha and Bimbisara remained in contact throughout the remainder of their lives which was another forty years. They remained in a sense friends, they saw one another quite frequently, and there are passages in the Pali scriptures or Pali texts which, you know, deal with their various encounters and the things that they said to each other. They seem to have known each other rather well.

Ratnapani: I got the impression from this (that) "There's a chap I would like to talk to, there's someone who I would like to spend some time with."

S: Right. And they are both young men. They are both in the prime of life. They are about the same age. There is the young king and the young man who could have been a king but who chose not to be. He went forth. Clearly the one is fascinated by the other, you get this. I have noticed this myself, that very successful worldly people are sometimes quite fascinated by spiritual men, or people following a spiritual path. They have got a certain [38] amount of energy and vigour themselves, it's almost as though they could have done it too if their life had taken another turn or, you know, they had a certain opportunity which they happen just not to have. So very often the successful worldly people have quite an affinity with the spiritual people, especially those who have done rather well.

Ratnapani: The (unclear) people, but who have got no comprehension of it, the very, very ordinary.

S: Yes. So one can really imagine, or visualize even, Bimbisara, you know, as a young king looking out from his palace and seeing this young sramana and really feeling attracted by him and wanting to get to know him, wanting to go and see him as we shall see this afternoon later on in the sutta. Perhaps, you know, we shouldn't think of their later relationship too much in the sort of orthodox or traditional Buddhist terms of Bimbisara becoming a lay disciple, the Buddha being the teacher. It seems to have been a lot closer than that. They seem to have had what we can only describe as a heart to heart chat from time to time about this and that, and this comes across very clearly in some of the scriptures. For instance, there is one little episode where the Buddha and Bimbisara are apparently seated together by the roadside of all places and a party of sadhus go by, about five or six sadhus, and as they pass by Bimbisara politely salutes them, then he says to the Buddha "Do you think those sadhus are Enlightened or not?" So the Buddha says, "It is very difficult to know who is Enlightened and who is not, Bimbisara." So Bimbisara says, "Well, it is interesting you should say that. Actually they are spies of mine, they are CID men, I just send them around the country just to gather reports, just to gather information. Actually they are not sadhus at all. I saluted them just to keep up the game so as to keep them happy. I wondered whether you would know."

(laughter)

So there are little episodes like this, you see, between the Buddha and Bimbisara. Bimbisara is almost testing the Buddha. "Well will he know that these are not genuine sadhus?" So he asks, "Do you think they are Enlightened or not?" But the Buddha can't be caught. He apparently senses that there is something wrong or that they are not really all that they seem to be, despite Bimbisara's action in saluting them as they pass. So there are little episodes of this sort, and then they both grow old, as it were, together and they are both old men of eighty, and they have got their various troubles. The Buddha has Devadatta trying to kill him [i.e. the Buddha, tr.] and to take his place. Bimbisara also has his own son imprisoning him and usurping the throne. So they are very sort of parallel situations in a way. So you get these two men remaining in fairly regular contact as quite good friends over a period of some thirty-five, forty years. It is quite an engaging picture that emerges from the Pali scriptures that you can piece together, and here is their first meeting. Bimbisara sees the Buddha wandering the streets of his [39] capital.

Ratnapani: That certainly knocks on the head the idea that you need to be a worldly failure to get into the spiritual life, or only worldly failures do.

S: I think this one of the great disservices that Christianity has done, as opposed to the classical tradition. Christianity seems to address itself to the miserable and the poor, the hopeless and the lost, as though they had some sort of special virtue which the others haven't got. It addresses itself to the failures, not to the successes, broadly speaking. Some of the successes were attracted too, admittedly.

Devamitra: I just want to say that Lawrence goes into that at great length in the Apocalypse.

S: He does indeed. It is worth reading from that point of view. And also Christianity tended to appeal to the resentful and the jealous and the envious, whereas Buddhism just didn't have that sort of appeal. It appealed if anything to those who were already successful but for whom success was not enough, who were young, who were strong, were healthy, were well to do, who had a good life ahead of them but who didn't think much of it all, who wanted something more than that.

Devamitra: Do you think Marxism carries on where Christianity left off?

S: Ah! In a way it does I'm sure, the way it stirs up envy and resentment and hatred, very much so, which is really deplorable.

Devamitra: Is that what you mean when, I think you say in one of your lectures, the basis of Marxist ethics are Judaic?

S: I don't remember saying this, but it is I think broadly true.

Ratnapani: So you might call it the opium of the people.

S: Any other points emerge? Important points? Where there is the going from the narrower to the broader context I've spoken about this at the beginning of the lecture on Buddhism and Art, the one that was produced as a booklet, do you remember? I've quoted Plato's parable of the cave and also Vivekananda's parable of the well frog and the ocean frog. And this reflects the general sort of - or these two examples reflect, you know - the general expansive movement on which the spiritual life is based. I think this is something I don't bring out so much in "Mind Reactive and Creative", but the creative mind is also an expanding mind, an expanding consciousness. Meditation is an expanding consciousness. So when you feel well, when you feel happy, really positive, you feel as though you are expanding, don't you? When you feel miserable, unhappy, depressed, you feel all sort of contracted [40] and within yourself. So to be happy and positive is to radiate, to be unhappy and negative is to contract. Have you noticed this? Even physically you feel it, as well as mentally and emotionally. So if

you are radiating you are on the right path. Shall we finish off with a quiet cup of tea?

Ratnapani: Do you want that recorded?

S: (laughter) I shall be doing the final editorial work and if I consider that comment inappropriate to this sublime context... No cut it off now.[41]

All right then, we have seen how the Buddha arrives in Rajagaha, how the king sees him and sends messengers in pursuit, and how they then return to tell the king what they have seen, where he is. So let's continue reading the messengers' speech.

(416) "This monk sits at the east
Of Pandava, great king;
A very tiger, bull,
A lion in hill lair!"

(417) The noble heard his tale
And in his goodly car
With utmost haste set out
Towards Mount Pandava.

(418) Along the road he drove,
Then getting from his car,
On foot the noble went
And, drawing near, sat down.

(419) Sitting, the king did greet
Him customarily
And compliments exchanged,
Then in this manner spake:

S: All right let's deal with that. So the messengers report: "This monk sits in the east." The word they use for monk is bhikkhu, I think. Let me just check that. Yes, bhikkhu, or bhikshu in Sanskrit. There is an interesting point in connection with this that I'll mention briefly now, though we are going to deal with it in some other seminar quite exhaustively. Trevor Ling points out that the word bhikkhu can also be derived from the word bhaga meaning a share. Bhikshu is usually derived from the word meaning to beg but it can also be derived from the word bhaga which means a share. So taking it to mean that a bhikkhu or bhikshu is one who has a share, what is meant by that? It is as though there is a surplus, people are producing but they produce more than they need for themselves, there is something left over, so the wanderer can claim a share, he can claim his share as it were. Do you get the idea? A share of the total produce, because there is enough left over to support people who aren't themselves actually producing.

So the idea therefore seems to be that someone who is leading a spiritual life - which in Indian tradition is believed to be in the direct benefit [42] of all - even if he is not actually doing anything for them in the way of teaching and preaching, such a person has a right to claim a share of the total wealth of the community for his support, and such a person is a bhikshu, not merely someone who begs. So it has been suggested by Trevor Ling that this word bhaga, or share, gives us a truer clue to the meaning of bhikshu than the derivation from the word meaning to beg, because especially in Buddhist countries nowadays and throughout Buddhist history the bhikkhu didn't beg but he was given his share as it were. He had a right in a sense to his share because of the life that he was leading and the example that he was setting. So in a way, you can say, we can apply this to those within the Friends, especially those within the Order, who are supported out of the resources of the Movement, because this means that they, on account of the work that they are doing, are claiming their share, or taking or receiving their share. Do you see the connection? So therefore one can say that those within the Movement who are working full-time for it and being supported are "share men" or bhikshus in that sense. So the Movement, that is to say the FWBO, fulfils the function of the total community in India in the old days. In other words it is a sort of traditional community within the much larger secular community which nowadays is quite indifferent to things like

shares and sharesmen and bhikshus and so on. So if one wants to look for an equivalent of a bhikshu in that sense within our own movement it is the full-timer who is supported and who, as it were, claims his share of the total resource of the Movement just as in the old days in India, in the totally traditional society, the bhikshu claimed his share of the total resources of the whole community.

Aloka: Is it like being on the dole, or is it different?

S: In a way it is, except that this is a dole that is willingly given, yes. And in the case of dole you are supported because you are out of work and have no work until such time as you are able to get work, but here you are supported because you are doing work. And the idea is that you should be able to continue doing it. Your work of course may be meditating. Your work may simply be doing nothing, in a way. Your work may simply be being your own inimitable self and not doing anything of any apparent value at all. That may be your work. This is the point I sometimes make: that in Buddhist countries in the East, even today, the bhikkhu, the monk, so-called, to use that word for a while, is not expected to do anything, for anybody, especially in the Theravada countries, and this is a very important point. The fact that he is bhikkhu is enough. Whatever he does is undertaken quite voluntarily and spontaneously. He does not have to do anything. He does not have to teach, he does not have to give lectures, he does not have to write books, he doesn't even have to meditate, in the eyes [43] of the ordinary Buddhist. The fact that he is just a bhikkhu and leading that kind of life is quite sufficient. The fact that he has gone forth, that he hasn't a home, hasn't a wife, hasn't got children. He's cut himself off from that sort of thing. He is just living as it were on his own, or with a few other monks in a similar condition. This is quite sufficient, that he is living that sort of life. He doesn't have to justify his existence or do something to make himself useful. So obviously this can be taken in the wrong sort of way and you get sort of lazy monks in the East. But most monks, most bhikkhus, like to do something, but what they do is done spontaneously, because they want to do it, not because anyone expects it of them. They are not under any obligation to make themselves useful. If they do make themselves useful it is just because of their own inner urge to do so, they don't feel under any sort of pressure to make themselves useful. And that's a very important point: as a human being, you don't have to justify your existence, or rather, you justify it by being human. And being human also means trying to be more than human.

Anyway that is just a little by the by. So this messenger says, "This monk sits in the east". This bhikkhu, this almsman, or sharesman, sits in the east... "of Pandava, on the eastern side of that mountain great king; a very tiger, bull, a lion in hill lair!" What do you notice about these epithets? Do you notice anything in particular about them? The Buddha is described as a veritable ... or the future Buddha even, is described ... as a veritable tiger, a bull, a lion. What's noticeable about that?

Voice: Strength.

S: Strength.

Aloka: It's one of the things I noticed in Wales that really struck home. All the farmers were putting the bulls out in the fields with the heifers and they really stand out, quite remarkably, very, very much indeed. From the point of view of strength they have an incredible presence about them.

S: So what does all this suggest? That the Buddha, even in the days before his Enlightenment, was described by people who just saw him from a distance in these sort of terms? What does it suggest?

Vimalamitra: A very powerful personality.

S: A very powerful personality. But what kind of powerful personality?

Devamitra: All very radiant and strong.[44]

S: Radiant and strong. He is not described as dove-like, or like a lamb, or anything of that sort. He is described as someone who is very powerful, heroic, even a dangerous animal. So it suggests tremendous strength and energy, sort of heroic qualities, suggests that very strongly indeed. So these epithets are applied to the Buddha throughout his career, after his Enlightenment as well as before.

"The noble heard his tale." The noble being of course the king, "And in his goodly car with utmost haste set out towards Pandava." His car is of course his chariot. So at once he calls for his chariot, and he whips up his steeds, so off he goes in haste, with utmost haste. So what does that signify? He is very, very keen to meet this stranger, this strange bhikkhu who has appeared.

Along the road he drove,
Then getting from his car,
On foot the noble went

I am not quite clear where exactly the Buddha was staying, which particular mountain this is: Pandava. None of the mountains at present in those ranges, as far as I know, is known as Pandava, but when you go up to the Vulture's Peak where the Buddha also stayed, you notice that there is a made up road going a certain distance and after a while you come to a sort of little monument at the side of the road, and it is said, according to tradition, that when King Bimbisara used to go and visit the Buddha, and when the Buddha was staying at the Vulture's Peak, he would drive his chariot up to that point and then he would dismount and walk the rest of the journey on foot, partly because it was difficult to drive a chariot any further, but partly also as a sign of respect. So there is this to be noted here too. He drives part of the way, then he dismounts from his chariot and he goes forward on foot. It was also said subsequently that after the Buddha's Enlightenment that when Bimbisara used to go and see him he would not only leave his chariot, but he would leave all his attendants, he would leave his sword and his turban behind. In other words he would divest himself of the insignia of royalty and just go to meet the Buddha as he was. So what does that signify?

Vimalamitra: He was going to see him as a teacher.

S: Yes, he is not going to see him as a king, himself that is, but he is just going as a human being if you like. So he is discarding all those signs of outward rank and position just as the Buddha himself did when he went forth, when he cut off his hair and beard and [45] gave up his princely robes.

Dick: Doesn't all this imply that Bimbisara is acknowledging the superiority of the Buddha?

S: Yes, yes it does. So:

.... getting from his car,
On foot the noble went
And, drawing near, sat down.
(419) Sitting, the king did greet
Him customarily
And compliments exchanged,

This again is just ordinary Indian etiquette. This is just the way you behave. There are many examples of this in the Pali scriptures. Everybody seems to be very well behaved, very well spoken, very well mannered. Do you ever notice this, those who have read the Pali texts - very polite, very meticulous? So the king observes the customary etiquette, he draws near, he sits down. You sit down first and then you just enquire after the visitor's health, he enquires about yours, a few polite remarks are exchanged, and then you start the conversation.

"Then in this manner spake." All right. Let's read what Bimbisara says.

(420) Bimbisara: "Tender art thou and young,
A youth in heyday-prime
With finely moulded form,
Like high-born warrior
(421) Adorning armed array
Before assembled chiefs!
Enjoy the goods I give,
And prithee, tell thy birth!"

S: This is quite interesting in a way because from this text at least, or according to this text, the Buddha is quite young, even though perhaps he has gone forth for several years. As I mentioned this morning the generally accepted tradition is that he left home at the age of 29, and this would now make him perhaps in his early thirties, even approaching 34 or 35. According to tradition again, he gained Enlightenment at the age of 35, but Bimbisara is clearly describing him as quite a young man, or even a very young man. So we can't be quite sure what the position is. Whether he was 20, or early 30s, or whether in fact he was 30. Maybe he looked younger than he actually was, who knows? [46] But we are not told that.

"Tender art thou and young,
A youth in heyday-prime
With finely moulded form,
Like high-born warrior
Adorning armed array
Before assembled chiefs!"

He looks just like a young warrior, in the midst of other young warriors who have drawn up for battle as it were. "Enjoy the goods I give." Perhaps he had brought offerings with him, which he is asking the Buddha to accept and make use of - foodstuffs, something of that sort. Or it might mean "enjoy whatever goods I am willing to give you". In this connection there is a very interesting later account, which gives a more detailed description of Bimbisara's meeting with the Buddha, or the future Buddha, apparently on this occasion, or just afterwards: Bimbisara was so impressed by the Buddha-to-be that he offered to share his kingdom with him, but the Buddha refused, saying that already I have given up, already I have gone forth from whatever I had, so I don't require any portion of your kingdom. So then Bimbisara said, "When after you have gained Enlightenment, after you have found what you are searching for, please come back and teach me." So the Buddha made that promise, that when he himself had found the truth, he would come back and teach Bimbisara and according to the Buddhists texts he did that some years later, and in that way, Bimbisara became a disciple. So it may be there's a little allusion to that here when Bimbisara says, "Enjoy the goods I give, And prithee tell thy birth!"

Why do you think he is asking about his birth? There is also a suggestion of caste here of course. It is just the Indian custom, you want to know where people have come from, who their father was, what tribe they belonged to, what their caste is, et cetera. In India, still, they have this sort of curiosity. They want to know this sort of thing. So what does the Buddha say?

(422) The Master: "On Himavant's snow-slopes
Yon dwells a people, king
Of wealth and energy,
Settlers in Kosala,
(423) Lineal kin o' the Sun,
Sakyans by birth; gone forth[47]
Have I, king, from that clan
And pleasures covet not.
(424) In pleasure I see bane,

And in renouncing them
I see security,
And I will go to strive,
Therein my mind delights."

S: So this is the reply that the Buddha gives. (pause) I'll just read the Pali so that you can hear what it sounds like. The Pali metre is very vigorous in this particular small sutta; the English translation doesn't give one any idea of that at all, it's rather halting. But what the Buddha says is,

"Uju janapado, raja, Himavantassa passato
dhanaviriyena sampanno, Kosalesu nicketano,
Adicca nama gottena, Sakiya nama jatiya;
tamha kula pabbajito (raja) na kame abhipatthayam
kamesu adinavam disva, nekkhammam datthu khemato,
padhanaya gamissami; ettha me ranjati mano' ti."

This is what the Buddha says in Pali. This sounds much more vigorous. So it is a very vigorous, bold sort of metre, a definite sort of march in it. It sounds very, very vigorous. Not quite like the translation, but still the translation is quite good. So the Buddha says, "On Himavant's snow-slopes," That's not quite literal, it means adjacent to the Himalayas. There is a district, there is a people "of wealth and energy." Dhana and viriya. Dhana is "grain" literally, that comes to mean wealth for obvious reasons. A people and a country of wealth and energy. It is quite interesting to see the Buddha's characterization of his own country and his own people. What he considers remarkable about them, that they were rich, prosperous, not in modern terms, but they had plenty to eat, they had plenty of corn, plenty of grain, plenty of fruit, plenty of vegetables, plenty of meat, plenty of butter, plenty of cheese. They had well-built houses, they had cloth, they had all these sorts of things. They had earthenware and brass utensils, they had ornaments of gold and silver, they were a prosperous people. At the same time they were energetic people, they had plenty of energy, plenty of stamina, plenty of strength. This was the Buddha's personal background. Other people in the India of those days considered the Sakyans, that is, the Buddha's tribe, to be proud. They had a reputation for pride and arrogance. But this might have been just their natural self sufficiency and energy, determination, which other people thought were pride and arrogance. But they did have this reputation. So there

"dwells a people, king,[48]
Of wealth and energy,
Settlers in Kosala,"

Literally it is just dwellers in Kosala because that whole part here acknowledged the general overlordship at this time of the kingdom of Kosala, so you could include that territory in the kingdom of Kosala.

"Lineal kin o' the Sun," What is that? Sun here is adicca. Adicca nama gottena. Belonging to a gotra called the solar. All kshatriyas, all nobles, all the nobles and warriors of India, traditionally even down to the present day, trace their lineage back either to the sun or the moon. So [there's] the suriyavagsi, those who belong to the solar dynasty, and the candavagsi, those who belong to the lunar dynasty. So the Buddha is claiming here that his particular tribe among the kshatriyas traces his lineage back to the sun. Other Pali texts give an elaborate, very lengthy lineage for the Buddha going right back hundreds of generations. This may be so or it may not be so. But clearly here the Buddha as a young man before his Enlightenment is quite proud of his birth in a positive wholesome sense, quite proud of his lineage and his origins. He comes from a gotra which is a solar gotra... (reading from the Pali text)... His caste is that of the Sakyas, his birth is that of the Sakyas. The word jati means both birth and caste. You can see the connection: "Gone forth have I, king, from that clan."

So he describes his country and his people and clearly he thinks well of them, he gives a good

account of them, but he has gone forth from them. Let there be no mistake about that. He has given them all up. He has left them behind. "And pleasures covet not." This is perhaps a reference to the offerings that the king has made him. When the king made his offerings he said (Pali text...). Bhujja is something to be enjoyed, an object of enjoyment. So the king is saying, "This bhujja which I am offering, or willing to offer... bhujjassu which means "enjoy it". So the Buddha is saying, "I have gone forth from that clan and I do not covet pleasures." kamesu adinavam...(Pali text) (pause) Covet. Covet means to hanker after. He says, "I have gone forth from that clan and I have no wish for any further objects of [49] enjoyment..." "In pleasures I see bane, I see harm and suffering eventually in pleasures. And in renouncing them I see security."

The word for security here is nekkhammam. Nekkhammam means a sort of renunciation, and khema is a sort of peace and security. So he is saying "I have gone forth from that clan, I don't covet pleasures any longer, I see, in fact, pain and suffering in pleasures. I am looking for a higher security."

And I will go to strive,
Therein my mind delights.

What do you think he means by striving here? The word is padhana. It's a very strong word. It means making an effort to evolve, an effort to develop. This is what I really want to do. This is in which my mind delights. So you can see here the Buddha gives an account of his country, his people, and himself. So what do you think you learn about the Buddha at this stage of his career from his reply to Bimbisara?

Voice: Vigorous...(garbled)

S: The metre, the way in which he speaks, is so vigorous.

Vimalamitra: It is also quite clear.

S: Yes, it is very clear, very straightforward, decisive, very direct.

Devamitra: Tremendous confidence.

S: Tremendous confidence, yes.

Ratnapani: I like the way he strives and delights at the same time.

Chintamani: He is taking the vigour of his people and applying it to the spiritual life, as if he is accustomed to behaving like this.

S: Yes, a very decisive, almost commanding sort of manner, except here he is commanding himself. If one was to sort of paraphrase this in prose, one might represent the Buddha as saying, "Adjacent to the Himalayas, there is a country and there is a people, wealthy and energetic. They are dwellers in the kingdom of Kosala. According to tradition, they are descended from the sun. Their caste is that of the Sakyas and I have gone forth from that clan. I do not [50] covet pleasures, I see pain and suffering in pleasure. I have given them up. I am looking for something higher, something further. I intend continuing to make an effort and my mind delights in making that effort." This is what the Buddha is saying.

Devamitra: There is that emphasis on vigour and confidence and what have you. But it is interesting that also Bimbisara says to the Buddha, "Tender art thou," so that you get the other side of it too, I mean that contrast between the tenderness and the warrior-like quality don't normally go ...

S: What did Bimbisara mean by tender? Let's look at the word for that: daharo, actually the text has young and tender, not tender and young. Young and tender.

Devamitra: I was taking it to mean that his general mien was sort of tender.

S: Look up and see what other meaning daharo has. It can mean delicate. It is pertaining to what is small, young, and boy-like. Therefore tender, delicate.

Devamitra: Not sensitive, or is that implied?

S: No it doesn't imply that. You are young and tender, delicate. You've clearly been brought up in a good family. You are not accustomed to hardship, to roughing it. There is this same word, as far as I can recollect, used in the Ariyapariyesana Sutta, where the Buddha says, "I was delicately brought up." So quite clearly the Buddha has not been brought up in a rough or difficult sort of way. He had good upbringing. He looked not only young but young and delicate, as though he hadn't done any hard manual work. His hands weren't rough or anything like that. But at the same time there is the finely-moulded form, and he looks like a high-born warrior wearing his battle gear along with the other chiefs all drawn up for battle. So there is that sort of combination. There is a certain tenderness and delicacy but at the same time there is strength, energy, and vigour. So it is the vigour that comes out in his reply. So it seems from this that the Buddha perhaps was considerably younger than is generally supposed when he went forth. In the light of this passage it seems unlikely that at the time he was in his early thirties, bearing in mind that in India people tend to age much more quickly than they do in the West. Anyway this sutta is quite a good opening for this whole chapter.

Dave: According to ancient tradition the peak of youth is sixteen, what is the peak of manhood?

S: I don't know that one is given.[51]

Dave: I know in the West it is 35.

S: Well that is halfway through life you see. If you have got your three score years and ten, 35 is half way through. According to tradition the Buddha gained Enlightenment at 35, but this may, as it were, suggest the median point. It may have symbolical significance, not to be taken literally. Though again the middle of life is very important. Buck, in his "Cosmic Consciousness" analyses the lives of so many famous teachers and mystics, and the middle years are quite important. The early middle thirties up to the late thirties, that whole median period of life.

So what sort of picture do you get of India in those days from this sutta, the religious and spiritual life of India in those days, from this exchange between Bimbisara and the future Buddha?

Devamitra: Obviously the spiritual life was something held in high regard.

S: This is very clear. You are using this term spiritual life, which is the term that we use. How do you think people saw that in those days? Especially going by this particular sutta, when they respected what were they respecting?

Devamitra: The individual?

S: The individual, yes.

Chintamani: Something on an equal level with and greater than a warrior or fighter, or hero.

S: Yes. You notice there are no religious connotations in a sense.

Vimalamitra: It is almost that it is completely ordinary to do that.

Voice: It doesn't presume, though, that he is such and such or attached to any particular ism.

They are just wanderers who wander and it's presumed that they're seeking truth. They are not presumed to be anglo-what-do-you-call-thems?

S: Not assumed to be escapist. Hardly running away from their responsibilities.

Dick: It is almost as if there is an unstated acceptance of the fact that really this is one's real responsibility and that in fact everyone else is shirking from it.

S: One can feel a sort of admiration on Bimbisara's part, and he is admiring the Buddha, or the future Buddha, for his obvious human qualities and all his heroic qualities. Has anything else become obvious or evident about the India of those days and the spiritual life of India in those days?

Phil: It is not at all institutionalized.[52]

S: It is not at all institutionalized.

Vimalamitra: There is no name for it.

S: Well, in a sense there is. The word bhikkhu is used isn't it? The almsround. This appears to have been a well-recognized institution. Also, you notice, that Bimbisara sends the king's messengers to follow the Buddha [-to-be], but it is quite clear they keep a sort of respectful distance. They don't harass him. They just keep him under observation. Just see where he goes and then, you know, one of them goes back to tell the king. They are quite respectful in the way that they treat him... (pause)

Devamitra: There is a very youthful feel to this whole passage too - the enthusiasm and eagerness. I know that they are both young characters but I almost feel it has got nothing specifically to do with their age. The vitality of it comes above their youthful vitality.

S: Yes.

Chintamani: There is the contrast between that sort of attitude and that sort of ... well one young man's appreciation of another really contrasts with the attitude of today, sort of [unclear] cynicism.

S: Yes, right. This is again noticeable: that in the Pali texts there is no trace of cynicism, as far as I recollect, on anybody's part. Cynicism seems to be a disease of modern man. (pause)

Voice: Would you say modern Western man was this modern man?

S: I mean that is the same thing. Modern Western man because, you know, all over the world, when you become Westernized you become modernized, when you become modernized you become Westernized. You tend to adopt this cynical attitude, this attitude of debunking and deprecating everything.

Voice: It is innocent.

S: It's innocent, yes. Again it is very Hellenistic. When reading some of these more archaic Pali texts one definitely gets much the same feeling that one gets say reading some of the Dialogues of Plato - very much the same sort of atmosphere. Very youthful, very earnest, very eager, not religious in our modern, or rather our Western, Christian sense. It is a quite different sort of atmosphere. It is a much more open-air atmosphere, much more healthy.

Vimalamitra: More real.

S: More positive, more real.[53]

Devamitra: You also have a tremendous feeling of the outdoors too.

S: As you do with Greek literature, Greek life. There is more space.

Chintamani: It's definitely a modern trend to equate the innocent with the foolishly naive.

S: Maybe we ought to ask Devamitra to read through the whole thing as well as you can. Just read it all through aloud, just so having studied and discussed it we can go back to it and get maybe a more vivid impression, bearing in mind everything that has been said about the sutta. Maybe? Don't follow the text just listen to it because this is what it originally was. Not something to be read but something to be heard.

Devamitra: [reads the entire sutta again]

S: It is quite dramatic isn't it? You notice that it has no literary pretensions but at the same time it is very, very effective. It moves very swiftly. It doesn't waste any time, doesn't waste any words. Things happen quickly and are told with a minimum of words, or described with a minimum of words. So you get a very vivid picture in this way. Anyway the Buddha [-to-be] doesn't stay at Rajagaha. He goes on, we know from other sources, and in the next sutta we find the Buddha on the banks of the Neranjara at the time of his Enlightenment, and he himself is describing what happened. Obviously nobody else would know. So quite logically, chronologically also, this sutta follows after the previous one. Can we go round the circle? Can someone read what the Buddha says?

The Striving - Padhana Sutta

(425) "As by the stream Neranjara I strove
Self-resolute, in ardent musing bent
To win security moil, approached
Namuci, speaking words of pity thus:"

S: All right. Let's go into that. First of all the sutta itself is called the Padhana Sutta, and you notice in the last line of the previous sutta the Buddha says "padhanaya gamissami," which means "I shall go to struggle." So padhana is struggle, effort, striving. So the Buddha says: [54] "As by the stream Neranjara I strove." He has come now to what we call Buddha Gaya on the banks of the river Neranjara where, according to tradition, at least later tradition, under the Bodhi tree, "As by the stream Neranjara I strove self-resolute, in ardent musing bent," Now here we come across this "musing". Let's see what the text actually says: jayantam yogakkhemassa pattiya. (pause)

Musing? We have gone into this before. You are familiar with the four jhanas or dhyanas? You have heard of those? The four states of superconsciousness, which are illustrated by those four similes of the water and the soap powder, the subterranean spring, and so on. So usually we have jhana, which is Pali, or dhyana, which is the Sanskrit equivalent as a noun. But in Pali very often it occurs as a verb and that gives great difficulty to the translators. You can translate dhyana as meditation or even superconscious state, but how are you to translate the verb jhayati? It isn't quite "to meditate", it is more like "superconscious-ize". You have to invent some such word as that. So what the translators usually fall back upon is "muse" - to muse - which gives a totally wrong and totally misleading impression, that the Buddha was just musing, ardently musing. How can you ardently muse? When you muse you are not ardent. So ardently cultivating, developing these superconscious states. This is what the Buddha was doing.

Chintamani: I remember in the Udana you connected ardent with vipaka.

S: Yes, let's see if there is a reference here of that sort. No. [It's] viparakkama, this means more like, not ardent in that sense, but more like very energetically, vigorously, practising jhana, cultivating jhana, achieving jhana states. (Pali phrase) ... bent upon, gaining the state of

yogakkhema, which is something like security, deliverance. It is translated by Hare "in ardent musing bent to win security from moil." One could paraphrase and say, "As I strove, self resolute by the River Neranjara vigorously meditating, vigorously achieving higher states of consciousness, in order to gain ultimate deliverance, then approached Namuci, speaking words in pity thus."

So who is Namuci? Namuci is Mara. It is another name of Mara. So he approached speaking words in pity thus. Karuna. Yes, compassion, karuna. The word which is translated as pity is karuna.

But just imagine the scene. Here is the Buddha, or the future Buddha, sitting by the [55] side of the River Neranjara. He is vigorously practising meditation. He is achieving, he's experiencing, higher states of consciousness. He is striving to gain what was subsequently called nirvana. He was striving to gain Enlightenment. And then he [is] approached [by] Namuci. He is approached by Mara the evil one, who speaks words of pity. Mara feels very sorry for the future Buddha because he is struggling so hard, he is undergoing all this effort. He is troubling himself so much. So what does he say? We will deal with Mara's motives a little bit later on. What does Mara say?

(426) ""Lean art thou, pale, and nigh thee hovers death;
(427) Thy life's a shred, a thousandth part is death's:
Live, sir, better is life! Alive, thou canst
(428) Work merit. As thou farest godly faring
And feed'st the sacrificial fire, heaps up
Abundant meed; by striving what is wrought?
(429) O hard is striving's way to tread, t'endure!"
These verses Mara spake, standing beside
(430) The Wake. To these the Master thus replied:"

S: So what does he say? "Lean art thou, pale, and nigh thee hovers death." So what has happened? According to some, or even most, traditions, the Buddha met Bimbisara at Rajagaha shortly after he left home, but after there was a long period of quest with various teachers. He also practised extreme self mortification, extreme asceticism, and suffered physically very much in the process. Then, according to most accounts, after a period of six years, that is to say six years after leaving home, he came to this particular spot which we now call Buddha Gaya. So he wasn't perhaps the blooming youth that Bimisara had met. He was lean and pale because he had been struggling and striving so hard and leading the life of a mendicant, living on alms. So, according to Mara he had come very near to death. He was in danger of death from his extreme way of life. So Mara says, "Lean art thou, pale, and nigh thee hovers death; Thy life's a shred, a thousandth part is death's." I'm not quite sure what that means that "Thy life's a shred, a thousandth part is death's." It looks as though death has much more than a thousandth part, if his life is only a shred. The general meaning seems to be that the Buddha is in danger of death, so Mara [56] thinks anyway.

"Live, sir, better is life!" What is that in Pali? Jivitam. In Pali it is very soft and gentle, very persuasive, very sweet. It is a very respectful way of address. "Jiva, bho! Jivitam seyyo; - jivam punnani kahasi" - Live, sir, life is best. This is what Mara is saying.

"Alive, thou canst Work merit." What is the use of dying? What is the use of sacrificing your life in this way? Go on living, come back to life, if you remain alive you can work merit! Now what did Mara mean by this?

"As thou farest godly faring
And feed'st the sacrificial fire, heaps up
Abundant meed; by striving what is wrought?
O hard is striving's way to tread, t'endure!"

So what is Mara's temptation? What is Mara tempting the Buddha to be, to do?

Vimalamitra: Get back on the wheel again.

S: Get back on the wheel. He doesn't put it quite so crudely as that.

Vimalamitra: Accumulate merit.

S: Accumulate merit. "Alive, thou canst work merit. As thou farest godly faring." We will come to this word in a minute, brahmacariya. "And feed'st the sacrificial fire, heaps up abundant meed." What is this sacrificial fire? Why does Mara refer to it?

Vimalamitra: It is what the brahmins usually do.

S: It is what the brahmins usually do. It is the sacrificial fire of the householder. When the brahmin householder gets married this fire is kindled in his house and he keeps it constantly alive and he makes offerings. This is the sort of simple Vedic tradition.

So it suggests domestic piety, the sort of religiosity which is centred upon the home and the family. In other words it signifies almost ethnic religion. So what [57] Mara's temptation is that he is tempting the future Buddha to be "good" in the religious sense, in the conventional sense, rather than be a spiritual person and to try to evolve. Yes? "To struggle and to try to evolve, that is difficult. It's better to fall back upon conventional, family-centred, family-based religion, and heap up merit and gain a good rebirth; go to heaven!" This is what Mara is saying. So here you can see the good is the enemy of the best. Mara is much too subtle, much too cunning, much too clever to say, "Well, look, give it all up! Have a good time! Enjoy yourself!" No, he's much too clever to say that. He says, "What is the use of all this striving? Lead a good life. Lead a conventionally religious life. Worship the family gods. Keep the sacrificial fire burning. Make offerings in that. Heap up merit. Go to heaven." The temptation is to be a good religious person in the conventional sense. Do you see that? Do you see the difference between the two? "All this struggling, all this striving to evolve, this is much too difficult!"

"These verses Mara spake, standing beside
The Wake. To these the Master thus replied:"

Do you see the contrast between the two? Do you see what I mean by this sort of family-centred, or home-centred, religion? Do you see what I mean by that? Well perhaps we had better go into that a bit more, because it's something we've come up against a little bit, you know, even within the Friends from time to time. What do you think is the sort of basic characteristic of what I call this - what seems to be exemplified here - this, as it were, family-based religion, or family-centred, home-based, home-centred religion?

Devamitra: It's elevating the family life to the spiritual level, whereas it's just on a much lower level altogether.

S: Hmm. Yes.

Chintamani: It exists to keep the family together.

S: Hmm. Yes.

Dick: Just to be respectable.

S: Just to be respectable, yes. It is also group-oriented.

Devamitra: But it's a very, very strong sort of micchaditthi, actually.

S: Indeed it is.

Devamitra: Even in the Order with some people.

S: Right. Yes.[58]

Vimalamitra: Well, how does it manifest?

Devamitra: Well, people giving priority to their domestic situation.

S: And not only that, but justifying it in pseudo-spiritual terms, yes? I mean this is the great crux. This is exactly what Mara says, yes? That, I mean, for instance, to give a crude example, someone says, "I can't come to the meditation class. Why can't I come? My wife wants to go to the pictures and I've got to take her. So, being a good Buddhist, I've got to be very unselfish, so... I really would love to come to the meditation class. I don't want to take my wife to the pictures. I am going to sacrifice my own desire to go to the meditation class. I'm going to take my wife to the pictures, and in that way I'm going to be a real Buddhist and a real Bodhisattva." Do you think this really rings true?

Devamitra: Oh! (laughter) It rings true in what sense?

S: Well, when the person says it. Do you think he...?

Devamitra: Oh, no, no.

S: ...within the range of your experience, someone who says this sort of thing is really being a Bodhisattva?

Devamitra: He's just rationalizing away.

S: He's rationalizing his own attachment to his family, his wife, and maybe the cinema too. But this is the way he puts it, yes? But it's very difficult to get around this, because basically, what really matters for him is his family, his wife, the cinema, and what-not, yes? But he is, you know, trying to make out that his attachment itself is a sort of, you know, spiritual thing: this is what it comes to.

Chintamani: One of the interesting things I've noticed in this sort of case is that the people who cling to their home life usually indulge in sort of very... Well, they tend to get involved in the more sort of higher teachings, and sort of armchair philosophize - talk about sunyata and this, that, and the other.

S: Well, for instance, someone wrote to me in a letter some months ago - I was rereading it recently - that, "I have to be unselfish and get on with my work at home. I can't afford the luxury of a retreat." Yes? As if to say, I mean, "those who go on retreats are being really self-indulgent because they are doing what they want to do, very selfishly, whereas we who stay at home with our wives and families are really unselfish; we are not doing what we want to do." But of course the truth is that they are, you know, they can't leave, they can't give up. But they rationalize it in this way. [59] They try to present it as a sort of religious thing when it is just their attachment. That's exactly what Mara says.

Devamitra: The thing that bugs me most, actually, is that with certain people there's a very definite air of martyrdom about it, you know. (laughter)

S: Well, again, this is that it's good to sacrifice - "Look how I'm sacrificing myself!" Well, you ought not to be sacrificing yourself, not in that sort of, you know, that sort of martyred manner.

Ratnapani: It's more of with the Christian ethic, even, isn't it?

S: Yes. Yes. Right. But this is very difficult sometimes to deal with.

Devamitra: Well, I think actually it's only very recently, even in the Order, that that whole thing has been smashed through, at least by some...

S: Well, I don't think it has been smashed through.

Devamitra: Well, I think it has been with some of us! I mean...

S: Well, some people have smashed through it, you know, in themselves.

Chintamani: Only the people for whom it matters, i.e. the married people, haven't smashed through it!

S: For instance, you know, when one is asked - as sometimes one is, you know - for a Buddhist wedding with full spiritual paraphernalia, to suggest, as it were, that the coming together of those two people in that particular way is something wonderful and spiritual, whereas it's just a quite normal, possibly even quite healthy - attraction of two people of the opposite sex and nothing more. You don't have to bring Buddhism into that. Yes? But one is expected, you know, to sprinkle lots of holy water and, you know, recite and chant suttas as though, almost, it's practically sort of people gaining Enlightenment in that way, you'd almost think, sometimes. Yes? But what does that mean? That attention is diverted from what actually does lead you to Enlightenment, yes? If someone says, "Well, look how unselfish I am being, you know. I am taking my wife to the pictures instead of coming to the meditation class." He's not practising unselfishness; he's afraid of losing his wife, actually. He doesn't dare to come to the meditation class; she might get somebody else to take her to the cinema perhaps. So he's afraid of this, but he doesn't want to admit it. So there's this veneer of unselfishness, which means he isn't able to practise real unselfishness. He kids himself that he's being unselfish, but actually he isn't. So a possibility of progress is blocked.

Aloka: So it's sort of more like what's conventionally accepted as being unselfish. [60] I mean, because quite often it seems, to do what you know you've really got to do appears to a lot of other people to be, well, you know, to be classifiable as selfish.

S: (throughout above) Yes. Yes.

Vimalamitra: Yes, that's quite... that can be quite hard, that kind of pressure on one.

S: And again, very often such people get at the spiritual person, saying, "He is very selfish. He's only thinking of himself, but we are thinking of others." But you are not thinking of others. You know, how have you come into contact with those others? That is the criterion. I mean, did you, for instance, marry your wife thinking, "Well, here's a poor woman that I ought to help. I'll support her for the rest of her life." (laughter) Did you? You know, quite objectively? No! It was craving that, you know, brought you together. And maybe worse than craving. Maybe you both had the same kind of problem, or your problems corresponded so you flew together. But, you know, the way that people talk, or such people talk, it's just as though it was an act of sort of purely objective altruism on their part, unselfishly caring for other people. And as for the children - well, you know, the same seems to apply to them, you know; it's just your pure unselfishness that you are supporting them, and people who don't have children are very selfish, they are only thinking of themselves. It's quite true, you know, that living at home as a family man or family woman you can develop some positive qualities, that is quite true. Some of it does make you a bit less selfish that you were, et cetera, et cetera. But the basic motivation is not that you were trying to be unselfish.

But sometimes people present the whole sort of set-up as though it were just an exercise in patience and unselfishness on their part, and the suggestion seems to be that therefore they are excused from any other sort of religious practice. And that is really dangerous. And sometimes, in Buddhist terms, a pseudo-Bodhisattva-ideal is brought in, and, you know, the example of Vimalakirti is quoted, which is, you know, quite wrong.

Devamitra: I heard it reported of a recent Order meeting in London that somebody had raised the point that there were not very many facilities in our own movement for married people, and I just wondered if you had any thoughts about that? I mean, in a sense, I mean, I don't... I mean, most of the people that I'm going to personally try and encourage, that I come into contact with, won't be married people, or I will be encouraging them in the opposite direction from their marriage.

S: Well, what does one mean by facilities for married people? One usually [61] would mean facilities for the practising which would enable them to practise without any change in their existing circumstances. This is what it really means. But if you practise, your existing circumstances are bound to change; you can't help it, because your whole way of life changes, I mean, as the Buddha or Ananda makes clear here.

Gone forth, he wholly shunned
In body evil deeds,
And rid of wrongful talk,
(407) He cleansed his way of life.

You can't help changing; your way of life can't help changing once you start practising, so if you say, "Well, I will agree to practise and facilities must be provided for me, provided my whole way of life is allowed to remain intact." Well, there's not really much use in that sort of practice. It may be all right for the complete beginner, just to reassure, say, "Well, make changes as you feel like making them; no one's going to compel you to." But you can't sort of guarantee someone that his whole way of life is going to remain unchanged, that nothing is going to happen to it. He can be quite sure of that. So he can practise Buddhism without any fear of having to give up anything? You can't give that sort of guarantee. So if providing facilities for married people means that, well, we just can't do it.

Devamitra: It's anti-Dharmic.

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: I gather from this that the married person who... just doesn't stand a chance, in fact, to go very far?

S: Well, one hesitates to say that, because, you know, human beings can, you know, make an effort under all sorts of adverse circumstances, but, you know, life being what it is, and people being what they are, one must really beware of rationalizations. I mean, one certainly can't... It would be almost cruel to say to someone who was married, "Well, you can't possibly make any progress." That would be quite cruel and quite untrue. One should never say or suggest any such thing.

Vimalamitra: If they were quite honest about the situation, if they really saw, you know, that it was craving, and accept that quite well, maybe they could, to some extent...

Ratnapani: You wouldn't have to say it, then, would you?

S: No. Well, there are such married people we know, who just cheerfully say [62] "Well, I've got my limitations," (laughs) and they accept them as limitations. They don't try to say, "Well, I'm much more unselfish than you are, because I'm supporting a wife and children." They say, "No, it's a limitation. I got caught some years ago, before I met the Friends. I wish I hadn't, but I'll do what I can." Well, fair enough, you know; that's a healthy, positive attitude, and such a person will evolve.

Devamitra: Do you think there is any point in encouraging such a person with that attitude generally, to actually leave home? I mean, literally, leave his wife and family?

S: Well, it depends. I mean, if he's got, say, young children, you can't very well do that. But if

he must, he must.

Devamitra: But, I mean, there are examples in the tradition, of that happening, aren't there?

S: Yes, that's true.

Devamitra: And if it is felt particularly strongly by the individual...?

S: Well, I don't think one should encourage. But if the individual feels sufficiently strongly, you won't be able to stop him. (laughter) But if the momentum of his own spiritual life leads him in that direction, fair enough, yes? But you shouldn't try to make him feel bad that he isn't taking that step. I mean that's very important.

Devamitra: Oh, sure. Yes.

S: Leave it to him and to the actual momentum of his own spiritual life. But what one should be quite sort of ruthless about is people who just rationalize. They just tie themselves into endless knots and try to tie you too, try to put you in the wrong, or even try to put you down, make you feel sort of selfish for not having all the responsibilities, or being loaded with all the responsibilities that they've loaded themselves with!

Chintamani: It seems to be in this sort of situation that people who have some sort of neurotic emotional attachment and can't admit it - well, I mean, usually if you have that sort of attachment you can't admit it, and try to rationalize, but the person who is quite healthy in that respect will say I've got my limitations.

S: Right. Yes.

Chintamani: And something else that occurred to me is that although obviously a middle way is the best thing in these matters, in this sort of situation, better to overdo it than underdo it.[63]

S: Oh, indeed yes. So this is what Mara, Namuci, karunam, well, it's,

Lean art thou, pale, and nigh thee hovers death;
Thy life's a shred, a thousandth part is death's:
Live, sir, better is life! Alive, thou canst
Work merit. As thou farest godly faring
And feeds't the sacrificial fire, heaps up
Abundant meed; by striving what is wrought?

I mean, what do you gain by making an effort? What do you gain by evolving, after all? This is what Mara says. "O hard is striving's way to tread, t'endure!" I mean, striving, in this technical sense of making that supreme spiritual effort.

These verses Mara spake, standing beside
The Wake.

So do you think Mara was being really compassionate, or really kind?

Ratnapani: He's being awfully creepy.

S: No, not at all. It reminds me of a scene in that little film - I don't know if anyone saw it? - on St Simeon Stylites. Did anyone see that? It's by that Spanish director. What's his name?

Voice: Bunuel.

S: Bunuel, yes.

Devamitra: Simon of the Desert, it was called.

S: Simon of the Desert. Yes. Did anyone see that?

Voice: Yes.

S: About St Simeon Stylites living on the top of a great pillar. It was a very interesting film, only about 25 minutes, and black and white. There was St Simeon Stylites, who was a Christian saint of the second century who spent his whole life, practically, up on a pillar practising self-mortification, singing psalms all the time. So this film was partly a realistic treatment of this, partly a bit of a send-up, and it was also a bit surrealistic, but it was a very interesting film. And in the midst of St Simeon's austerities, when he's been there years and years, sort of perched upon this pillar, Jesus appears. And he's so pleased to see Jesus. But it's a rather strange sort of Jesus. Jesus has got funny little sort of curls round here. They don't look quite right, they look a bit artificial, rather pretty little flaxen curls. And then Jesus says, "Oh, Simeon, I'm so pleased to come and see you. I've been watching you and I really do admire your austerities, and your prayers and all this psalm-singing, and [64] all the hardships. But don't overdo it. (laughter) Don't harm yourself too much. Take it easy, my son." And when Jesus says, "Take it easy, my son," Simeon just sort of turns his head, and you can see this look of suspicion cross his face (laughter), and he looks and, of course, it isn't Jesus, it's the devil dressed up as Jesus. So it's very much like this: this pseudo-kindliness.

And this raises another point - we must be very careful not to be pseudo-kind with our own friends. Do you see what I mean? I mean, someone might be really making an effort and you might feel a bit sorry for them and say "Well, you know, take it a bit easy. Don't over-exert yourself. Tread a middle way." You might even say that, but be very careful. I mean, sometimes people can over-exert themselves and they can go to extremes and you may need to say, "Let up a bit." But be very careful that you yourself just don't feel a bit upset sort of seeing them make that extreme effort and want to sort of get them to, you know, slacken off a bit, more for your benefit than for theirs. (phew! sounds) One must be very careful of that. Have you ever come up against this or noticed this in yourself or in others?

Vimalamitra: I've felt that a bit myself when I've been trying hard.

S: Hmm. I mean, not towards oneself, but towards others?

Ratnapani: Yes, I've felt... jealous...

S: If you feel towards others...

Ratnapani: ...someone who's really putting themselves through it.

S: Yes, well, you may not be conscious of an actual feeling of jealousy, but you may feel genuine sympathy, but there is a sort of weakness, not a real sympathy. The real sympathy is "Go at it. Make a hard effort. Never mind if it hurts. You're doing the right thing." You know, that's real sympathy. But "Oh dear. Don't do too much. It shouldn't really hurt, you know. The Buddhist path is a middle way, et cetera, et cetera." You can sort of take that rather weak attitude, especially dealing with people that you are attached to.

Dick: These verses of Mara's here - would this be like the conditioned aspect of the Buddha at this point?

S: Well, one could certainly take it in this way. This is, you know, the whole question of how one looks at Mara. Is Mara a real, objective, externally existing personality, you know, coming and standing beside you and whispering these things in your ear? Or is it just your own mind, your own [65] weaker mind, just that residual part of yourself which is not yet Enlightened? Is it just the gravitational pull personified? Is it a thought that crosses the Buddha's own mind: "What am I making all this effort for? Where is it leading me? Maybe it

would be better for me just to follow the traditional religious practices - go home, get married, you know, tend the sacrificial fire, earn merit, have a good rebirth. Why not? Maybe that is a better way. Maybe I'm wasting my time?" Maybe it does represent a temptation of this sort, or, you know, thoughts passing through the Buddha's own mind. But sometimes our experience is such that we seem to hear, or seem to see, something external, some other personality, as though speaking to us, as in a dream. In a dream, it's all our own mind, but we experience it as objective, as external, so that you can have those sort of experiences in the waking state, in the meditation state. So who can tell whether it is an objective external Mara speaking, or whether it is a train of thought passing through the Buddha's mind?

Dave: If you treat it as a train of thought, just as a train of thought, it becomes a bit, not quite so clear.

S: Not quite so dramatic. But whether it is a train of thought or whether it is Mara speaking, you know, the arguments are equally false, equally misleading.

Chintamani: It reminds me of the story you told about St Francis of Assisi discussing the high points of his spiritual career.

S: Ah, right, yes.

Chintamani: What St Francis could do, his... (noises) (pause)

S: Though the word which is translated "godly faring" is "brahmacariya", which is the standard Indian term for the spiritual life; it means the sublime life, the noble life. Later on it came to mean simply celibacy, but in the Buddha's day it certainly didn't mean that, it simply meant a higher life, a noble life, spiritual life, sublime life, not religious life in the ordinary sense. (pause)

So one can see also an antithesis here between the conventional religious life, which is a sort of, you know, glorification of the status quo, and a genuine spiritual life, which results in self-transformation. Do you see the difference? (sound of assent) And of course, you know, in later times, you could be leading this sort of safe, pseudo-religious, or pseudo-spiritual life, in a Buddhistic form or [66] Buddhistic guise. One mustn't forget that possibility.

Aloka: The whole thing's sort of gravitational pull...

S: Hmm. Yes.

Aloka: ...constantly trying to pull everything down...

S: Right. You're right. Yes.

Aloka: ...to a lower sphere.

Devamitra: That's why it's really good, you know, that there hasn't... there is not... we haven't got any form of solemnizing of weddings, and the like. I mean that's the first step towards decay, in a way, isn't it?

S: In a way, it is, yes.

Devamitra: Or one, at least.

S: This is ethnic religion, which is OK in its own place, but it's got nothing to do with us, really.

Vimalamitra: How do you feel about the same thing with babies and naming and so on?

S: Oh dear! I think all these things must be kept sort of as peripheral as possible, huh? You know, I noticed this sort of thing when I was in India among the ex-untouchables. What happened was this: the Untouchables, as you know, or the ex-untouchables in west India, they became Buddhists - that is, they went for Refuge, they took the Five Precepts - all right, what did that mean in practical terms? We used to have lectures for them - lectures about the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, Buddhist teaching generally - but what were they most interested in? Wedding ceremonies. Wedding ceremonies!

So eventually a situation developed where, wherever you went among them, your whole time would be occupied celebrating weddings! (laughs) Yes! You could spend a whole day, a whole week, performing wedding ceremonies. To be a Buddhist came to mean, in a way, for many of them, that you had that particular kind of wedding ceremony. And then what happened was - a further development - I went down among these people one year for Wesak, and I found that dozens of them had arranged to have their wedding celebrated on Wesak day, (he laughs) and they thought, because this is the holiest day in the Buddhist year, this is the most important event in our lives, so therefore the proper time to have this is Wesak day. So there was no Wesak meeting or lecture about Buddhism or anything like that; it was a series of wedding celebrations! Or at least it would have been if I hadn't been around. I rather unceremoniously relegated them all to the early morning and late at night, and arranged for, you know, the proper Wesak celebration to be held during the greater [67] part of the day. But that was the tendency: that they elaborated the wedding ceremony more and more, and the Buddhist talks were within that context, and the suttas were chanted within that context. That was clearly the most important thing for them, or for many of them. So if you're not careful, your religion becomes using, say, Buddhist suttas and things like that to bless weddings, or to celebrate weddings, to bless babies, to consecrate houses, to bless and consecrate businesses, new firms, and factories, new branches, opening shops! Yes. All of this. Pregnant women (laughter), yes, blessing pregnant women! Yes! I mean I've done it, I've done that too (hysterical laughter) in my time. After-death ceremonies, which is a bit more religious; people are in a quite different sort of mood then. And then, if you're not very careful, you may be called on to bless troops, machine-guns, tanks - as bhikkhus sometimes are in Thailand, and they do it, so what happens? Your whole sort of spiritual life or religious life becomes a sanctification of worldly life, and a sanctification of the status quo, not an individual development. The sprinkling of holy water upon everything mundane. This is your religious life! hm?

Ratnapani: It'd be difficult to see because Christianity has so utterly become that, so we're not used to thinking it would make any difference.

S: Yes. Well, the sacramental system of the Catholic Church: everything becomes as it were sacramentalized, or pseudo-sacramentalized.

Devamitra: Do you think it would be a mistake to completely ignore things like wedding ceremonies?

S: You can't completely ignore them, because they do take place.

Devamitra: Well, how does one...?

S: But I think the important thing is to keep them well on the periphery. I saw clearly among the ex-untouchables, they were trying all the time - I say "they", but actually it was the people involved - to move from the periphery to the absolute centre of the stage. More trouble, more expense, was spent as regards the weddings, more care taken, than of any other Buddhist event! And this was really extraordinary. So for many people, becoming a Buddhist meant that in future they had Buddhist weddings. And so you take, for instance, suttas in which the Buddha is saying, "Give up the world! Have nothing to do with sense-pleasures! Gain nirvana! Meditate!" You chant all these things on the occasion of weddings (laughs), which seems ridiculous, doesn't it? I mean, talk about the gravitational pull! [68] But this is what is happening all the time, and this is what I call in one of my lectures, the tendency of the

universal religion to become an ethnic religion. So it's best that the secular remains secular. You don't need to sanctify the secular. It's all right as it is. If you want to get married, get married. No fuss or bother about it. Why bring in Buddhism? I mean, why have Buddhist suttas chanted over that particular procedure, that particular business?

Ratnapani: If I was running a centre, I'd be more inclined to say that - if someone came along, just say that "Why bother to mix them?" as you just did, because...

S: I mean, I used to say - and I used to believe this - that if you had a Buddhist wedding ceremony it meant that you intended to live your married life together in accordance with Buddhist principles. But, you know, eventually I got tired of saying this because I saw nobody took it seriously! They hadn't come together to practise Buddhism. I mean, what did they come together for? You know, not Buddhism! I mean I don't want to tell you what they did (laughter) come together for, but they didn't come together for that! And here are you saying, "What is the purpose of marriage from the Buddhist point of view: it's so that you can practise the Dharma together." They are not going to practise the Dharma together, so why should you sort of provide them with the illusion that they are? It may be in very rare, exceptional cases, yes. And maybe when they get a bit older. But not in the first flush of youth! I mean, what are they going to do on their honeymoon? They are not going to discuss the Abhidharma (loud laughter) are they? So I started feeling that I was being - not exactly a hypocrite - but I was just playing somebody else's game, yes? This is what I started feeling, and so I stopped, and I said, "I won't personally celebrate any more weddings." And I haven't done, over the last few years. If they have been really seriously - if they have been taking seriously - what you said, and if you felt they were really going to make an effort as husband and wife to be Buddhists together and practise the Dharma together, all right, fair enough, you can say those things, but it seems to become just a matter of words, a bit of holy patter that you produced on the wedding day to make it all sound good; that they were going to practise the Dharma together.

Vimalamitra: Tantra!

Chintamani: You remember when we were at Albemar there was a book on Nepal, and there were some pictures in it of some Nepalese lamas; married ones. Have I showed it to you?

Devamitra: I can't remember.

Chintamani: They looked really washed out! [69]

S: Anyway, this is what Mara says. Mara is putting forward the temptation of this pseudo-spiritual life, this life of conventional religion, which is merely a sanctification of the status quo, and has got nothing to do with the higher evolution of the individual. And the Buddha, of course, rejects the temptation. So what does the Buddha say? Let's read that next.

The Master: "O wanton's kin, O evil One! Why needst
(431) Come here? No jot of merit is a need for me!
Mara should speak to them who merit need!
(432) Here's faith, thence energy; and wisdom's mine:
Why bidst me thus self-resolute to live?
(433) See how this wind dries up the rivers' flow!
Shall not blood dry in me, self-resolute?
(434) While dries the blood, my bile and phlegm dry up,
While wastes the flesh, mind more serene becomes,
Steadier awareness, wisdom, mind-intent.
(435) While thus I live, enduring utmost pain,
Mind seeks not pleasures! See a being cleansed!
(436) Lust's thy first force, thy second's termed dislike,
Thy third thirst-hunger, fourth is craving called,
(437) The fifth is torpor-sloth, the sixth named fear,
Doubt is thy seventh, thy eighth self-will and cant;

(438) Gains, favours, flattery, honours ill-won,
 Exalting self, despising other folk:
 (439) Namuci, such thy force, black scourge of man!
 No craven conquers that; who does, wins bliss.
 (440) See, I bear munja grass! A fig for life!
 Better to fight and die than lose and live!
 (441) Some votaries, engulfed here, go astray,
 Nor know the way by which the pious fare.
 (442) Mara, high-mounted, legion-girt, I see
 And go to fight! He shall not loose my hold.
 (443) Thy force which devas nor the world can crush
 By wit I'll break, as stone an unbaked pot.
 (444) With purpose bent, with mindfulness well set,
 I'll fare from realm to realm and listeners train;
 (445) Those earnest, resolute in my behest -
 Tho' will ye nay - shall go where none do grieve."

S: This is a very difficult piece of translation. It's very well translated, actually, though it doesn't read as smoothly in English as it does in the [70] Pali, but let's see what we can do with it. I'll read Chalmers' translation. It isn't a particularly good one, I mean it's not as good as Hare's, but it does give another reading of the text, as it were. Chalmers says:

"Thou Evil One! Thou congener of sloth!
 (431) I lack no peddling rudiments like these;
 no jot of such-like 'merit' profits me!
 Mara should speak to those who 'merit' lack.
 (432) Seeing that faith and energy and lore
 have purged all self away, why talk of 'life'?
 (433) The wind dries rivers up; - shall this my blood
 still course when Self is dead, when Self has gone?
 (434) While blood is drying up, the humours too
 dry up; and with decay of flesh my mind
 grows calmer; stronger grows its watchfulness,
 its garner'd Lore, its concentration rapt.
 (435) As thus I dwell, who've braved and borne pain's worst,
 my heart for pleasure feels no zest at all.
 Behold then, Mara, how a man is cleansed.
 (436) Pleasures of sense compose thy foremost ranks;
 dislike's thy second; thirst and hunger form
 thy third array; cravings come fourth; the fifth
 (437) is sloth and torpor; sixth faintheartedness;
 doubt makes the seventh; th'eighth, - pretence, hard heart
 (438) and [s]elf, repute, the pride of place, with fame
 ill-gotten, scorn of others, praise of self.
 (439) Black Mara, such is thine attacking force,
 which only heroes overcome in fight,
 and in their conquest find abiding Weal.
 (440) Shall I cry craven? Nay; a pest on life!
 I'd sooner die than brook defeat - and live.
 (441) (Engulfed in this world's bogs, some anchorites
 and brahmans wholly sink from sight and view,
 and never come to know the path saints tread.)
 (442) Seeing this host arrayed, with Mara there
 riding his elephant of war, I go
 to fight him! May he never beat me back!
 (443) Thy hosts - which neither men nor gods can rout -
 With Lore I'll crush, as pebbles smash a bowl.
 (444) As Captain of my thoughts, with set resolve,

from realm to realm I'll find me followers[71]
(445) zealous and purged of self, whom loyalty
to my commandments, from their lust-free Lord,
shall bring where sorrows find no place at all."

So do you get a different sort of impression from this translation? It's a little bit of a paraphrase, but he brings out more clearly certain things, which are only implied in the original.

Dick: Yes, I think I prefer that one.

S: You do.

Aloka: Much more.

S: It is more poetic, in the traditional English sense. It makes very good sense, though it isn't quite so close, always, to the letter of the original. But it's quite a... well, they're both quite tours de force, you can say, both these translations. Anyway, let's start going through them. I don't think we can finish this today, but never mind. It's quite important.

"O wanton's kin," says Hare. "Thou congener of sloth!" says Chalmers. What does the Pali text say? Pamattabandhu. Yes, it's sloth. What does Hare say? It is wantonness. Bandhu is a friend or kinsman. "O evil One! Why needst come here? No jot of merit is a need for me!" Why does the Buddha say that? In what sense is merit not necessary for the Buddha?

Vimalamitra: Because he's trying to break through the Wheel.

S: He's trying to break through the Wheel. You know, merit is... well, a conditioned good. He's not thinking in terms of merit, he's thinking in terms of emancipation, he's thinking in terms of release, of nirvana, he's thinking in terms of the transcendental. This is, again, the difference between the so-called religious life and the spiritual life, just using those terms. The religious life is concerned with a sort of improvement of the mundane, whereas the spiritual life is concerned with breaking through the mundane into a different dimension altogether. So according to traditional Buddhist teaching, you can accumulate merit by means of skilful actions, and those merits will cause you to be reborn in a happy, human state, or even in a happy, heavenly state, but you are still on the Wheel, you're still liable to birth and death and rebirth, you're not off the Wheel, you're not on the [72] transcendental path. So the Buddha doesn't need merits.

"Mara should speak to them who merit need!
Here's faith, thence energy; and wisdom's mine:"

Let's see what those terms are in the Pali. Saddha, viriya, and panna; three out of the five spiritual faculties, yes, faith and energy and wisdom. So the Buddha says, "Here's faith, thence energy." So he says, here is faith, and from faith, energy. Now in what sense has the Buddha faith? And how is it that energy comes from faith?

Devamitra: Faith in himself.

S: Faith in himself. And faith, in a way, that there is some higher state, something transcendental, to be attained. Not as a sort of dogmatic belief, but he feels it, as it were, deep within himself; he's convinced of that.

Vimalamitra: Inspired.

S: Inspired by the idea of that or the ideal of that. He feels a sort of innate tendency within himself to move towards that. It's that sort of feeling that we can't justify, always, rationally, that there is something higher towards which we can move, and the feeling to move towards

it, that is faith. So here's faith. "Thence energy." How is it that faith gives you energy?

Devamitra: The feeling provides the energy.

S: Feeling provides the energy, yes. If you translate faith or saddha as confidence, as sometimes is done - and certainly faith has that connotation too - then you can see, perhaps, the connection more clearly: that where there is confidence, there is energy. If you are confident in what you are doing, confident of what you are doing, confident in yourself, there will be energy. Lack of energy is lack of confidence, lack of energy is lack of faith. So what is the opposite to faith, then? Doubt. Self-doubt. And what inhibits energy? Doubt, especially self-doubt.

Devamitra: And indecision.

S: And indecision.

Devamitra: And inability to commit.

S: So the Buddha says, "here's faith" - that is, in himself - "thence energy", "and wisdom's mine." Panna: it may not be wisdom in the transcendental sense; sometimes panna is used in the sense of understanding, sometimes in the sense of wisdom as insight into the transcendental, into ultimate reality. [73] But anyway, the Buddha says:

"Here's faith, thence energy and wisdom's mine:
Why bidst me thus self-resolute to live?"

I don't quite make out the sense of this but the general meaning is quite clear. "Why do you bid me lead this purely conventional, pseudo-spiritual, religious life? I mean, I am endowed with those qualities, faith, energy, wisdom, which will enable me to lead a higher spiritual life. To strive and to gain nirvana, to gain Enlightenment."

"See how the wind dries up the river's flow!" There's the river flowing past. Maybe it is the summer season, the river is drying up.

"Shall not blood dry in me, self resolute?
While dries the blood, my bile and phlegm dry up,
While wastes the flesh, mind more serene becomes,
Steadier awareness, wisdom, mind-intent."

So Mara started off by compassionating the Buddha for being pale, for being nigh to death. So the Buddha says, "It doesn't matter. The wind is drying up the river; in the same way my blood is drying up, all the humours of the body are drying up. The flesh is wasting away, but the mind is becoming more serene, the awareness is becoming steadier. So is the wisdom, so is the mental intensesness, mental concentration. All these are becoming clearer and steadier, so what does it matter, in a way, what happens to the body?" Do you think the Buddha is adopting here a one-sidedly ascetic attitude? Do you think he is doing this or not?

Voice: No.

S: No he isn't.

Chintamani: This is tied up with something... if you've experienced something very worthwhile, you then discover the things in yourself that block that experience. You realize that your initial experience is far more worthwhile than the sort of transitory pleasures of enjoying the things that actually block the experience, so you just get rid of them.

S: Right. Well, it's like when you're playing a game that you thoroughly enjoy, even like football, you may get injured. [74] You may realize afterwards that you are all cut and

bruised, and maybe you've got a bone broken, but you don't care, you don't bother, because you've enjoyed the game so much, it has meant so much to you. Whereas some person might say, "Oh, how can you play football, how can you possibly enjoy it? Look how injured you get, look how dirty you get. You cut yourself, you bruise yourself, look at your poor ear!" Well you'd say, well, what would your reaction be? "What does it matter, I've thoroughly enjoyed the game. We won!" So Mara is trying to compassionate the Buddha in the same way, "Oh, how lean you are, how pale you are!" The Buddha says, "So what? Look at the river, look at the wind, it dries up the river, so even my blood dries up, my bile, my phlegm. If the flesh withers away what does it matter? My mind is serene, my mind is clear. I'm concentrated, I'm intent, I'm preoccupied with what really matters. So what does it matter what happens to my body?" So this is not a one-sided asceticism, this is just the determination of someone to get his priorities right and if necessary to sacrifice the lesser to the greater. He's not sacrificing the lesser for the sake of sacrificing the lesser, the lesser to the greater, but he's making the sacrifice because it is really necessary. We can't have the greater without sacrificing the lesser to that.

Chintamani: Self defence.

S: "While thus I live, enduring utmost pain, mind seeks not pleasures!" There's rather a sort of note of, "I mean, what does it matter if I'm suffering pain? At least while suffering pain my mind is prevented from seeking after pleasure."

"see a being cleansed." What is this in Pali? Passa sattassa suddhatam. Yes, that is more literal than Chalmers' "Behold a man who is purified". Behold a man who is free, a man who is Enlightened practically. I mean, this is the result, this is my present state, what does it matter that I've suffered? What does it matter that I had to go through it? Look, I'm cleansed, I'm Enlightened, I'm purified. That is the justification as it were, look at the result. What does it matter that he has become pale or lean, that's completely irrelevant. "See a being cleansed." [75]

Then he really attacks Mara: "Lust's thy first force, thy second's termed dislike." Here, of course, we come into the imagery of the traditional conquest of Mara, or battle with Mara, as depicted in Buddhist art. You are probably familiar with this. Yes? That Mara is represented as the leader of a great host, a great army, with all sorts of battalions of demons and demonesses. So the Buddha is referring to that.

"Lust's thy first force, thy second's termed dislike,
Thy third thirst-hunger, fourth is craving called,
The fifth is torpor-sloth, the sixth named fear,
Doubt is thy seventh, thy eighth self-will and cant;
Gains, favours, flattery, honours ill-won,
Exalting self, despising other folk:
Namuci, such thy force, black scourge of man!"

It's rather interesting that black, kanha, is the Pali equivalent of Krishna. The god Krishna is etymologically the same as Kanha or Mara.

Chintamani: The king of the...

S: Right. That's very interesting isn't it?

Devamitra: Well, was the Krishna cult already in existence at the time of the Buddha?

S: Possibly, on a very popular, sort of folk level. But what is God for the ethnic religion is the devil for the spiritual religion, the universal religion. Just as in the case of Gnosticism, the God of the Old Testament becomes the devil of the New.

Chintamani: And in Blake too.

S: And in Blake, yes.

So you can say, even, on another level, the gods of the ordinary man become the devils of the man who is trying to evolve. Do you see what I mean?

"Namuci, such thy force, black scourge of man! No craven conquers that." So who is required to conquer this force or army of Mara? No craven, no coward, only a hero can do it. [76] "... who does wins bliss." Who makes that conquest, who defeats Mara's army, wins bliss.

Chintamani: What's the derivation of Namuci?

S: I don't know. It is a proper name. There is a Dictionary of Pali Proper Names, which I don't have, which one could look it up in. ["given because he does not allow either gods or men to escape from his clutches, but works harm" Sutta Nipata Commentary, ii. 386, tr.] It's a fairly common name for Mara. Kanha, the Black One, is another one, or in Sanskrit Krishna. Kanha means dark, in the sense of swarthy, dark blue, black, even sort of brownish.

"See, I bear munja grass!" So the footnote says that munja is "a kind of bulrush. The wearing of a munja girdle denotes a vow, vrata, for brahmins; here perhaps the reference is to the way of the 'pious', subbata." "See, I bear munja grass." - I've taken a vow. Presumably a vow not to give up even though I die, until success has been attained, until I've reached nirvana.

"A fig for life!
Better to fight and die than lose and live!"

So here one sees, as it were, the Buddha's warrior blood coming out very strongly on this higher spiritual level. This is very much the kshatriya ethic: better to fight and die than to lose and live, or not fight and live. (pause)

Devamitra: That's also very reminiscent of Greek traditional values, that sort of attitude.

S: Also some of the Zen people. Or perhaps we shouldn't mention them. Chalmers is much more vigorous in this next verse.

"Engulfed in this world's bogs, some anchorites
and brahmins wholly sink from sight and view,
and never come to know the path saints tread."

Devamitra: I love the image of them being in bogs!

S: In the world's bogs. Hare translates it rather less vigorously: [77] "Some votaries, engulfed here, go astray, Nor know the way by which the pious fare." That word pious is quite out of place here. I mean pious in its modern English kind of thinking. A pious person. You don't think of anything very heroic, do you? You usually think of the local vicar with his dog collar and Sunday sermon.

Devamitra: It has the connotation, at least for me, of emasculation.

S: Yes. It's really a pity that religion has that sort of connotation now, because you don't get that sort of impression from the Sutta Nipata, of the spiritual life as something emasculated.

Vimalamitra: It tends to go hand in hand, I think, with the idea of suffering and giving all these things up, just giving them up as if you are not giving them up for something better.

Devamitra: Actually you just mentioned the vicar's dog collar, that sounds like it's a really appropriate term for it: the priest with his dog collar, a domesticated animal.

S: (laughs) Yes. Well this is the whole difficulty about modern man. Modern man has

become a domesticated animal. (laughter) The man who has gone forth has gone back, as it were, into the wild state, like the dog that has broken his chain and shaken off his collar and run off to become a wolf again. It's a bit like that, in the sort positive sense. I mean, to be domesticated is not to be a man. If a so-called man's whole life is spent providing for a family and looking after his wife and his children, and his whole interest centres upon that, he's not a man any more, he's a domesticated animal. If he does that among other things, fair enough, he can still be a man. If he still has his higher interests but carries on with those responsibilities at the same time, fair enough, he's still a man. But if your whole being is centred upon that, and that is your whole life, you are not a man any more.

Dick: So going forth is you're picking up where you left off, or picking up where man left off.[78]

S: Yes. "Mara, high mounted." He's traditionally represented mounted on an elephant. "legion girt, I see
And go to fight! He shall not loose my hold.
Thy force which devas nor the world can crush
By wit I'll break, as stone an unbaked pot."

Look at the Buddha's confidence. That is the spirit in which he faces the armies of Mara. I don't quite like that word "wit" though. Let's see what it is: panna. It's rather strange to translate it as wit. By wisdom - actually it is that, it is being the real Buddhist technical term - by wisdom you smash Mara and his hosts. By force of samadhi you can only hold them back, you can't permanently defeat and overthrow them. They are only permanently defeated and overthrown, the whole conditioned is permanently smashed, only by wisdom, only by insight. You need the energy of meditation behind that insight, but it is the insight itself that does the penetrating and smashing, which breaks through.

Ratnapani: So you can always fall back, on any amount of meditation?

S: Yes, I mean meditation in the samatha sense, meditation not conjoined with wisdom. The development of wisdom is the real thing. Meditation is the basis for that. So you see the Buddha's heroic spirit and kshatriya spirit. By wit, by panna, by wisdom "I'll break as stone an unbaked pot". Probably the translator just needed a word of one syllable here.

"With purpose bent, with mindfulness well set,
I'll fare from realm to realm and listeners train;
Those earnest, resolute, in my behest -
Tho' will ye nay - shall go where none do grieve."

So the Buddha is saying not only will I defeat you, not only will I conquer you, but I shall cause others to conquer you too. "With purpose bent, with mindfulness well set, I'll fare from realm to realm." I'll travel from place to place. As we know, the Buddha subsequently did too.

Devamitra: It seems the Bodhisattva intention is really brought to light here.[79]

S: That is, too. It is not just for his own sake.

Devamitra: Which very often you don't get that feel in other accounts that I've read of the time immediately before the Buddha's Enlightenment.

S: Right, yes. This seems to be his intention, yes, even before the Enlightenment, or at that crucial moment. "And listeners train." It is interesting that the word sravaka, listener as it literally is, is the word for disciple. Disciple is one who listens, and that refers not only to the fact that to learn you had to listen because there were no books, but also to that attitude of receptivity, not just hearing, but really listening. "Vinayam puthu." Vinaya means training, not in the sense of monastic rules, as it afterwards became, but a whole positive way of life. "Those earnest," appamatta - mindful really, not heedless. "resolute in my behest": mama

sasanakaraka. Sasana is a word which is very often used in Buddhist countries for what we call Buddhism. The sasana, have you ever heard it called that?

Voice: The Buddhasasana.

S: The Buddhasasana. We can't quite translate it accurately, it's something like message, but also something like order, or command, or imperative. It's rather difficult to convey this. If one thinks for instance in terms of will and power, if someone out of his will gives you an order how would you feel about that?

Voice: Resentful.

S: Resentful. But if someone gives you an order out of his power, how would you feel about that?

Voice: I would obey.

S: Yes. So the sasana is the order, which issues, as it were, from the Buddha, by virtue of his natural spiritual power, or innate spiritual power.[80]

Voice: So what does that refer to in the text?

Voice: What is it translated as?

S: Behest. Which is very weak. Sasanakaraka means doing, performing, my behest. It's not command, it's my imperative, it's very important to get this over. It's authority also, it's the natural authority which power has over you, which you cannot but obey if you are really receptive. That is what it really is. It's authority in that sense, real authority. If you're confronted by real authority, if you are a receptive honest person, you cannot but obey that. And the authority is the authority of the individual as such, not the authority of his position or his power in the worldly sense, or his name. But the sheer authority of that individual as such creates such an impression on you that you cannot but follow, you cannot but obey, that is what is meant by sasanakaraka. So this term sasana is very important. It's a pity that we don't use it more. In modern Buddhist countries it does tend to mean something like organized Buddhism, or the institutional religion, but it doesn't really mean that in Pali.

Voice: Could you use it instead of Buddhism?

S: Yes.

Voice: Because I've heard, speaking with people that I've come into contact with in London, one thing that really sort of gets their backs up is the use of the word Buddhism, and Buddhist too ...

S: Yes, it's Buddhasasana, it's the Buddhasasana, it's the order, the imperative which issues from the Buddha by virtue of his spiritual attainment, and which you, as a human being receptive to that cannot but follow.

Voice: What's the Pali word, is there a Pali word for one who obeys the sasana?

S: I don't think there is, incorporated into the word sasana itself. You can get sasanadhara, you could say that would be the correct idiom. [81] Sasanadhara means one who bears the sasana, in the sense of observes or practises. There's also the term dharmadhara, one who bears or carries, in the sense of observes and practises the Dharma. So sasanadhara there is.

Voice: What would that be?

S: One who accepts the sasana, one who accepts the order, the sasanadhara.

Voice: The man who... ?

S: That is true. Dhara means more like one who accepts, one who accepts the order, but it's not an order issuing from anybody's individualistic will, but the order emanating, you could say naturally emanating, from someone's enlightened being, which is a real power. This whole concept of sasana is very important. You can't make it just behest, or message, or command; that's completely wrong. Command suggests something willed and egoistic, one person ordering another person about. "Message" is just some information transmitted, even "order" again suggests some military discipline or something like that. It isn't that in the least. It's a bit like the ethical imperative, if you know what I mean.

Voice: No.

S: Well Kant, for instance, said that there are two kinds of imperative, there's the hypothetical imperative and the absolute imperative. The hypothetical imperative says, "If you want to be happy do this..." Yes? The absolute imperative says, "Do this. There's no reason for doing it, just do it." So the sasana is of the order of the absolute imperative, and that according to Kant is the ethical imperative.

Voice: It brings in power.

S: Yes, in the power as opposed to the will sense. Because the Buddha is the Buddha, well there is, as it were, power emanating from that, from that enlightened individuality. Not power in the mundane sense, but the sort of compelling force of that enlightened [82] personality. And those who are sensitive and receptive, those who accept, just follow that power, follow that through. They become sasanadharas, bearers or carriers or acceptors of the sasana, of that imperative, which is the transcendental imperative. This is what I originally translated it as once, the sasana, the transcendental imperative of the Buddha. Buddhasasana, the Buddha's transcendental imperative. This is where the word "imperious" also comes from, or is connected with: imperative, imperious, in the true sense. An imperious person, though the word has become debased nowadays, is the person with that natural authority, the person whom others naturally obey, not because of his superior position but because of the sheer force, as it were, of his character, though not in a will sense, the sheer force of his being.

Voice: In a really, sort of, good hierarchy a position of rank is presumably the outward manifestation.

S: Yes. But the real trouble starts when people with no natural authority, no natural power, occupy positions of power, and derive their so-called power, their so-called authority, entirely from their position, their rank in society, their political position, their political power, even their money, which is dreadful. You have to respect someone just because they have money, which is absolutely awful, it is most immoral. But this is what happens, people are respected just on account of their money. Their money talks, their money does all sorts of things. It's a thoroughly immoral state of affairs.

Voice: They're not really respected though. It's their money which is respected.

S: Well no. They are respected. It's their money, they are deferred to, they are considered, or people crawl to them.

Voice: Yes, but they are more kind of (...unclear...)

S: Yes, but what an odd sort of relationship, what an odd sort of attitude - how perverted, how twisted.

Voice: If they are effective then it doesn't matter does it?[83]

S: Well no. If they've got that money out of sheer personal capacity, well that's another

matter. But suppose they just inherited it, or won it on the pools. I mean, some people are destroyed by it, in this sort of way. They just can't handle it. Or a weak person born to be a king, he just can't handle it. He may lose his throne sooner or later.

Voice: He may lose his sanity. You know, goes into what he feels he ought to be, and in the process cracks up?

S: If he can't be a decent constitutional monarch and get away with it that way. We said that Bimbisara - to go back to Bimbisara - you feel he's a natural king, he's a born king, in the full sense of the term. He has the royal authority, he has authority as a person. Not the same authority as the Buddha, he knows that, he recognizes that, even before the Buddha's Enlightenment. But they both have authority in their own way, genuine authority. So to refuse to recognize this, that someone has power, that someone has authority, that someone is in a position to issue that imperative, not to be receptive to that, well it is a disastrous sort of thing. So this is what we find so much of in the modern world. Or else we find that it is imitation, which is even more dreadful. You do find people sort of sticking out their chests and adopting a military swagger, and thinking that this is authority. This is what Hitler and Mussolini went into, which is quite a different, sort of travesty, of the real thing. But the fact that that travesty existed often causes people to ignore the real thing. To look down upon the real thing, or gives them an excuse to look down upon the real thing.

Voice: Or even, they just don't even acknowledge that it's there.

S: Or even, if you just mention the word authority they start shouting Hitler, et cetera, et cetera.

Voice: But if someone in the world, they came into contact with someone who has real power, they just call them fascists.

S: Yes. Right.[84]

Voice: The very idea of authority... (unclear)

S: Yes. I was quite interested to see that even in, to go a little bit off the record, but anyway, even in some of the contributions to Shabda the word fascist crept into at least two of them, I found that very significant and very sad also.

Voice: Communists call Buddhists fascists.

S: Do they? They also call them elitists. That's another term, you know, that you're elitist.

(short gap in tape)

S: ... quite the greatest of the virtues. OK, so the Buddha is saying, to get back to the text, is saying not only is he going to defeat Mara, but he's going to go around encouraging others to defeat Mara. Which is in a way even worse from Mara's point of view. "With purpose bent, with mindfulness well-set, I'll fare from realm to realm and listeners train." Real disciples, "Those earnest, resolute in my behest", my imperative, "Tho' will ye nay." Even though you are against it. "Shall go where none do grieve", that is, to nirvana. Mara can do his worst, even though he doesn't like what the Buddha is going to do, the Buddha is going to do it. This is the Buddha's determination. So what does Namuci say? Let's conclude with that.

Namuci:

(446) "For seven years I've dogged the Master's steps;
I'll find no fault in the alert Awake!

(447) There circled round a fat-hued rock a crow,
"Maybe it's soft," he thought, "Maybe it's sweet!"

(448) Finding no sweetness there the crow flew off:

As balked stone-pecker I leave Gotama."
(449) O'ercome with grief his lute his armpit slipt,
And that dejected spirit disappeared."

S: So Mara cuts, in the end, a rather sorry figure. Let's see what Chalmers says, what his translation is.

"For seven years I might keep dogging him,
yet with the watchful Buddha get no chance!
To see if it was soft and good to eat,
a crow hopped round a stone that looked like fat;
but, disappointed, flew away again.
- In like disgust I give up Gotama!"

Then the Lord says

"In grief, the sprite then let his lute slip down,
as, sick of heart, he vanished out of sight."

[85] Mara in the end disappears, he's been seen through, his lute slips down - you know it's a sort of guitar, or his vina. The seven years presumably refers to the Buddha's period of austerities and striving before he gained Enlightenment. It's a very graphic simile, one can say. So Mara disappears, he's completely routed, and the Buddha has gained Enlightenment.

Voice: So this is another version of the, of the more elaborate one in the...

S: Yes, both these suttas seem to be very early versions of crucial episodes in the Buddha's life. First of all his going forth and his meeting with Bimbisara and then his final defeat of Mara and attainment of Enlightenment, with the six or seven years struggle in between. So you are given a very brief but very sort of dramatic, very powerful introduction to what follows - and follows, of course, various suttas giving teachings. I rather get the impression that this particular chapter - the Great Chapter was a self-contained work, which afterwards was incorporated in this particular collection the Sutta Nipata - all these chapters might well have circulated originally as self-contained works. Well we know that one did: the Atthakavathka, which is probably the oldest part of the Pali canon. That's the part that is quoted from and referred to in other portions of the Pali texts. And as I mentioned there's even a commentary on it that is included in the same Pali texts.

Voice: Have you done any study on that one?

S: No. It's very difficult, the language is difficult, the ideas are difficult. We've not yet got around to that, I hope we shall one day.

Voice: Something that occurs here is that if you've got the determination to beat Mara, then Mara is pretty well defeated.

S: Right, yes. Well, what is Mara, Mara is self-doubt, yes? So if you, as you say, you have the determination to defeat him, he is defeated. It's the determination which defeats him. It's the lack of self confidence which is dangerous, to think [86] that you are weak, that you can't do it, that you ought to take things easy, maybe lead a life of piety instead, a life of good works, domestic religion.

Well, any query on this whole sutta? It's called striving, remember, virtana, which is a very strong word: effort, struggle. You notice in both these suttas the kshatriya spirit of heroism coming up quite strongly.

Voice: Usually we find that, since the Buddha first went forth, the seven years as an ascetic are usually undermined in a lot of writings, and then he sort of realized that...

S: Right, yes. As though that was an entirely wrong path that had no value whatever. As though it was one great big mistake from beginning to end. Well maybe at certain times, yes, the Buddha did do things in a very extreme sort of way, but not all the time by any means. No doubt from all that we can tell the final Enlightenment came in a moment of complete relaxation in the fullest and highest sense. But you can't really experience relaxation unless there is a preceding effort. You can only really rest after you've made a real effort. The man who never makes an effort is never able to rest.

Voice: There is quite a dismissive attitude really, to that period in the Buddha's life.

S: As though, you know, you should just forget all about making an effort, just sit quietly down by the side of a river under a nice tree and have a nice muse. And, you know, that's the way to Enlightenment.

Voice: No, I mean, not to eat too much because that's too far the other way, but a nice good meal every day at least.

Voice: It's like ignoring the twenty blows against the rock, the previous nineteen blows.

S: Indeed, yes. So the twentieth blow is the real blow.

Voice: (laughter) Just do that.[87]

Voice: This is one of the basic things in karate, they keep telling you that you can't relax until you've really trained hard.

S: Right. Also we must remember that when the Buddha spoke about the middle way, he spoke about it within the context of Indian asceticism and Indian sensuality, both of which were very, very extreme. So what we would regard as very extreme asceticism would come pretty near to what the Buddha would regard as the middle way. When the Buddha spoke of avoiding the extreme of self-mortification, what did he mean? Well, sort of hanging upside down from the boughs of trees (laughter) and sitting in the midst of fires, towards the four cardinal points and sun blazing overhead. Or standing on one leg for years on end. That was the sort of self-mortification the Buddha had in mind. What we would regard as self-mortification he would have regarded as a very ordinary, everyday matter indeed. I mean, we would regard one meal a day as self-mortification, but the Buddha didn't, that was a quite ordinary way of living. And the Buddha always slept on the ground, he didn't carry a mattress around with him, [but] he didn't regard that as asceticism, he regarded that as the ordinary way to live. In South India today people never use a mattress, ordinary people. They have a reed mat, that's all they have. I have slept on a reed mat for years and years. That's not asceticism, not in South India, it's the way everybody lives. Lots of people in this country would regard giving up meat and fish as real asceticism, but even we don't, it's just an ordinary way of life, nothing particularly ascetic about it, we've got used to it, it's quite natural now.

Voice: And presumably, the amount of money that we don't have, that's regarded with shock and horror by some people.

S: Yes. So in the same way, what we would regard as extreme asceticism, the Buddha might have regarded as the Middle Way, in this particular matter.

Voice: It seems to be, there seems to be quite a general principle that when a society of people lacks inner wealth, they try to make up for it in outer wealth.[88]

S: Well this is true of the individual: when you lack inner wealth, inner resources, individual resources, you try to accumulate external things, or you try to latch on to other people. You have a neurotic craving to fill your own inner emptiness with things and contacts and experiences and so forth rather than to grow into them naturally, so that your own fullness

leads to an even greater fullness. You feel empty so you try to stuff yourself with all sorts of external things.

Voice: So when you feel empty, you just stay with it.

S: Stay with it, yes. Just really experience it.

Voice: That's real asceticism (laughing).

S: Yes, yes indeed. Well, take these two suttas jointly, how do you feel about the pair of them? What sort of general overall impression do they produce?

Voice: The strongest impression I've got now is that it's a true story.

S: It's a true story yes, this is what really happened, it really was like that, you can believe it. There's no embroidery. Even despite the reference to Mara, that's comparatively easy to take. If you wish to do so, you can easily regard it as a train of thought passing through the Buddha's own mind, which is completely plausible, completely intelligible. So yes, it could really have happened like that. It sounds very true to life - a real story, the real story.[89]

Chintamani: It's very inspiring.

S: Yes.

Devamitra: There's a tremendously, sort of, healthy feel to the whole background.

S: Yes.

Devamitra: Which is, say, lacking in our own culture.

S: The Buddha coming from among these people of wealth and energy, yes?

Devamitra: But also the king's attitude, which I find really quite impressive towards him.

S: His eager response to the Buddha the first time he set eyes upon him. Well, before he became the Buddha. How eager he was to make contact, the manner in which he approached him.

Devamitra: It's a bit like the Greek ideal of friendship between men too.

S: Yes, right.

Devamitra: It's got that kind of...

S: There's no... As soon as he sets eyes on the Buddha, he just wants to get to know him, he likes him, yes.

Voice: Yes, he looks at him. "I wonder what he wants", is more like the problem you expect now.

S: Yes, right.

All right, maybe we should leave it there for today.[90]

S: ... three in the Great Chapter, page 65. It's the Subhasita Sutta, which Hare translates "goodly words" and Chalmers as "apt words". We'll see what subhasita means in a minute.

Voice: Is that with a double T?

S: No with one T. Sutta has two Ts.

Voice: Subhasita?

S: Subhasita. Su is a prefix meaning good, well, or happy. Bhasita means simply speak. So it's really simply well spoken or happily spoken, or well said - the sutta of the well said or the well spoken or the happily spoken. You notice "goodly words" has a sort of pietistic ring doesn't it? You notice these subtle distortions. "Goodly words" - it's subhasita, what is well spoken, well said.

Voice: Before we start, can I just ask, what is this actual book called? This actual book the chapter's coming from.

S: Well the whole text is the Sutta Nipata. The Sutta Nipata is divided into five chapters. The Great Chapter or Mahavagga is chapter three, and as you'll see it consists of thirteen - I think it's thirteen, let me check that - short suttas. Mostly in verse.

Voice: This "Woven Cadences" is a translation...

S: Yes, this is Hare's translation, E. M. Hare's translation, in the "Woven Cadences". No, there are twelve short suttas, not thirteen.

Devamitra: What does "Woven Cadences" actually translate?

S: Sutta Nipata.

Devamitra: It does translate...

S: Yes. Roughly.

All right. Subhasita Sutta. Let's start reading round. First the prose introduction.[91]

Goodly Words: Subhasita Sutta

"Thus have I heard: Once, when the Master dwelt near Savatthi ... in Jeta Grove, he said: "Monks when a word has four qualities, it is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, it is not blameworthy, nor blamed by the wise. What four? Herein a monk speaks goodly words, not evil words; speaks Dharma, not otherwise; speaks kindly, not unkindly; speaks the truth, not what is false. Monks, when a word has these four qualities, it is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, it is not blameworthy, nor blamed by the wise."

Thus spake the Master; and when he had thus spoken, the Wellfarer spake again as teacher."

S: Let's hear that verse then we'll discuss the whole section.

(450) The goodly word calm men proclaim supreme;
And second, speaking Dharma, not otherwise;
Third, speaking kindly, not unkindly words;
And speaking truth, not speaking false, is fourth.

S: Now this particular sutta has, more or less, the standard form of a sutta as it developed perhaps later on. You notice there is this little introduction, "Thus have I heard". In the course of the Buddha's own lifetime his teachings were of course current. The Buddha himself used to teach, used to hold discussions and conversations with his disciples. And it happened that the disciples themselves would sometimes put his teachings into their own words, even put them from prose into verse, even made up what we might describe as ballads giving the Buddha's teachings. And these ballads they recite for their own edification, so as to help them remember the teachings, and they'd also chant, possibly even sing, the ballads to other people as they went about from place to place. And it does seem that much of the sort of material

that is represented by the Sutta Nipata originated in this way. I mentioned that there is another chapter of the Sutta Nipata called the Atthakavagga, the Chapter of the Eights. Which was current as a whole chapter, as we now call it, in the Buddha's own day.

There's a story of a young monk, a young bhikkhu, coming to see the Buddha. He's gone forth and been accepted, in other words become a bhikkhu, in some distant part of the country. He was the disciple of one of the Buddha's principle disciples, but he'd never, as yet, met the Buddha himself. So he set forth on this long journey, came to Savatthi where the Buddha was staying, met him, and the Buddha asked him what he understood of the Dharma, whereupon he recited the Atthakavagga: this is what I have learned, this is what my teacher has taught me. So it does seem from this particular incident and various other pieces of evidence that quite a few of the disciples [92] were in the habit of reducing the Buddha's teaching to verse form, even to ballad form, and spreading the teaching by reciting these ballads and teaching them to their disciples and so on.

So much of the Sutta Nipata seems to have originated in this way. But later on people wanted to know, well, all right, the Buddha gave this particular teaching, the teaching contained in the ballad, but what were the circumstances? Whom did he give that teaching to? And where? What led up to that? What were the circumstances? So they started adding little prose introductions to the ballads, saying the Buddha was staying at such and such a place, a certain person came to him and put such and such a question, then the Buddha said... and then you get the ballad following. So in this way you get the Buddha's teaching prefaced by a sort of prose introduction setting forth the circumstances under which the teaching was given. And of course later on Ananda came to be regarded as the repository of all this information, so Ananda is supposed to say, "Thus have I heard. The Blessed One was at one time staying in such-and-such a place, somebody comes to see him, then he gives such and such a teaching." In this way the teaching is firmly anchored in time and place and you know the circumstances under which it was given. So this seems to be, in all likelihood, a slightly later development. So here you have an example of this sort of thing. The first two suttas were simple ballads with no prose introduction, but this one has got a prose introduction explaining how the teaching contained in the ballad came to be given, and as you'll see, you'll even see the Buddha giving the teaching in his own words, both in prose and verse, and then a disciple elaborating what the Buddha had said in prose and verse into a ballad of his own. This is quite an interesting sort of development. But we'll get to that in a minute.

Voice: So this isn't directly what the Buddha spoke, it's kind of interpreted by...

S: Not interpreted; it's more like put into a different form. Not that anything has been changed.

Devamitra: Crystallized.

S: You could say crystallized, or expanded to, as we shall see in a minute. So you get the idea, the Buddha would say something, he would [93] explain something. A disciple would either just remember the very words of the Buddha or he could summarize or expand what the Buddha had said in his own words. For instance the Buddha said of Sariputta that he was pre-eminent among the disciples for his wisdom, and he further remarked that it was one of the great characteristics of Sariputta that what the Buddha himself had said in brief Sariputta could expand in detail, and what the Buddha had said himself at length and in detail Sariputta could summarize in a concise form. Sariputta had both these qualities, both these capacities.

So we can see from this that the disciples were in the habit of presenting the Buddha's teaching in their own words, summarizing or expanding and so on. We don't always necessarily have the Buddha's own, exact, precise words. Again, of course, a lot of the Buddha's teaching was summarized under headings: the three of this and the four of that and the five of something else. Very likely the Buddha himself summarized his own teaching in these ways, and had these sorts of summaries and outlines which he filled in slightly different ways at different times and in different places according to the needs of the persons that he

was talking to. For instance, he might give a slightly different account of the five spiritual faculties or the twelve nidanas. Sometimes we find him speaking only about eight nidanas or ten nidanas, according to the circumstances, not about the full list of twelve. Sometimes we find him speaking about twenty-four nidanas in a couple of places and that is very important indeed. So we mustn't think of the Buddha's teaching as something set forth in one particular unalterable form and that form invariably being reproduced. No doubt here or there in the scriptures there are the Buddha's actual words, no doubt certain phrases, even whole sentences, even whole paragraphs very much as the Buddha said them, but the rest is expansion, condensation, recasting, summary, and so on, or just setting forth of the spirit of the Buddha's teaching in entirely different words. And all this material comprises the Pali texts, the Buddhist scriptures. So you can get some idea now of the sort of thing that happened.

Voice: Sometimes they missed, didn't they? Like in the Udana where the prose and the verse don't seem to coincide.

S: Right, yes, because sometimes the prose doesn't really belong to the verse or the verse doesn't really belong to the prose. But later compilers, having to arrange them somehow, put them together [94] where they don't always quite fit. In the case of the Udanas, sometimes they don't fit at all and you really need to consider the verses separately, the verses are usually older. Now here you get quite an interesting development, first of all you see the Buddha saying certain things in prose and it's so simple that he very likely did say it just like that. Then you see the Buddha putting his own prose teachings into verse. Have you noticed that? This is what the Buddha had done here. What he said in prose he has repeated in verse. But why do you think he did that?

Voice: Because of the ease of remembering.

S: Ease of remembering. So it seems that the Buddha, after having spoken, after having given a teaching, was sometimes in the habit of recasting what he had said in the form of an impromptu verse. And we must remember that in the Indian languages it is much more easy to produce verses than it is in English. As it is in Italian - I don't know if you know about this but in Italy in previous centuries they had people who went around improvising verses. I mean, Italian is so flowing and rhymes are so easy to find that you can improvise verses, you can speak in verses if you are quick-witted and have the gift of language. And it is much the same in Indian languages. With Indian languages you're quantitative, like Latin and Greek, Sanskrit and Pali are. You don't need to find rhymes. The rhythms flow very easily so it isn't difficult to speak in verse. Do you get the idea? So that, especially if you are really keyed up, you're in an inspired mood, it is not very difficult for people to produce verses, even a whole string of verses.

For instance, the Udana verses are of this kind. Udana means what is breathed forth. So the verses in this book, which is called the Udana, are verses breathed forth by the Buddha. Especially at various crucial phases of his career under the pressure of tremendous inspiration he, as it were, just breathed forth inspired utterances. So sometimes, as here, the Buddha is talking about a certain subject, gets maybe into a mood of inspiration, then summarizes what he says for the benefit of the disciples in the form of a verse. This is perhaps why it says, "Thus spake the Master; and when he had thus spoken, the Wellfarer spoke again as teacher." Do you notice that Wellfarer is Sugata, a title of the Buddha? "One who is well gone, happily gone, the Wellfarer" Hare translates it. So "Thus spake the Master". Let's see what the terms are in Pali. Idam avoca Bhagava. Bhagava is more like - it's usually translated as - Lord, but I've translated it in [95] another context as "richly endowed one", "the one who possesses all possible spiritual qualities". And when the happy one had thus spoken, the Sattha, the teacher, the guru if you like, spoke again. Or the Wellfarer, the holy one, spoke again as teacher; in his capacity as teacher he summarized his own teaching in the form of a verse for the benefit of the disciples so that they could learn it by heart and then reflect upon its meaning, recite it to other people, and teach it to other people. So obviously the Buddha was anxious to communicate his teaching and seems to have adopted various methods of fixing it in the

minds of people. One course was the famous list, or list of lists: the three of this, the five of that, the ten of something else. Another method was parables and similes: that was another way of fixing it in people's minds. I personally think that all the really important - all the best - similes and parables that we find in the Pali canon are the Buddha's own work. For instance like the man wounded by the poisoned arrow. [Culamalunkya Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 63, tr.] Remember that one? Can you think of any others?

Devamitra: The raft.

S: The raft [Majjhima Nikaya 22.13, tr.], the smouldering anthill [Majjhima Nikaya 23, tr.]. I personally think that all these go back to the Buddha himself because they have a sort of touch of genius about them. So in the scriptures, in the Pali texts, the Buddhist texts as we have them at present, these parables they don't occupy a very big place in terms of space, but that mustn't mislead us. The Buddha was much more a teller of parables than he was perhaps a reciter of lists, or at least as much a teller of parables as he was a reciter of lists. So that was another way in which he tried to fix his teaching in people's minds and help them remember. And then of course by versifying some of his own teachings. Maybe the Dhammapada - or at least some of the Dhammapada - originated in this sort of way. So here we find the Buddha doing just that. He versifies his own teaching, he reproduces in metrical form what he's just said so that the disciples can memorize it more easily, learn it and teach it to others.

Voice: Is this always the case? Is it always the Buddha who has put these into verse?

S: No it isn't. Sometimes the disciples remember a list, I mean, different teachings lend themselves to different kinds of treatment. [96] If the Buddha's just given a talk about say the five spiritual faculties he may end up producing a little verse, or a disciple may produce a verse, or they may simply remember those five terms - faith, wisdom, meditation, energy, mindfulness - and have a rough recollection of what the Buddha said under each of those headings. But even if they forget exactly what the Buddha said under each of those headings at least they will remember the headings themselves, and will fill in roughly according to what the Buddha said, or roughly in accordance with what the Buddha said. I also notice in the course of my own lectures and talks that people very often remember best the stories, the parables. I found that in India certainly, I mean years and years later someone would say, "I remember you telling such and such story or such and such parable in a lecture that you gave." And it's that that has stuck. They might not even remember what the lecture was about or where you gave it, but they remember that story. So we must think of the Buddha as not only teaching people, not only trying to communicate what he himself had experienced or what he himself was, but trying, as it were, to fix the impression by means of stories and parables that people would naturally remember, or by lists of terms, numerical lists, or by just versifying the teaching, recasting it in metrical form so that they could learn it by heart and teach it later on to other people.

Right, let's look at the content of the teaching. Or maybe first of all we should say a few words about the venue. "Once when the Master dwelt near Savatthi ... in Jeta Grove." I mentioned yesterday that in the Buddha's day there were these two great kingdoms, Magadha and Kosala. And the capital of Magadha was Rajagaha or Rajagraha, which means the king's house or royal house. And the capital of Kosala was Savatthi or Sravasti. It is rather significant that the first two cities to be mentioned in this chapter are the two great capital cities of these two kingdoms, and the Buddha was accustomed to visit both of them. And it seems especially towards the end of his life he spent more and more time in Sravasti or Savatthi. There is of course this well-known story of how the Jetavana Vihara was established. You might remember that when the Buddha was once in Rajagaha there came to see him a wealthy merchant from Sravasti who was so impressed by the Buddha's teaching that he invited him to visit Sravasti and not only invited him but prepared a residence. Not what we now call a monastery, but a sort of little dwelling place in a park. He purchased some land from a young prince called Jeta. [97] He purchased his garden and grove. And there he constructed a rest house for the Buddha. And this became the famous Jetavana Vihara and the Buddha spent many, many rainy seasons there, and many of the teachings,

many of the discourses, were given there. So this is a very common beginning.

"Thus have I heard: Once when the Master dwelt near Savatthi" and usually it says "in Anathapindika's park in Jeta Grove" then "he said". This is a very standard, very common introduction. A lot of teachings were given there, just because the Buddha spent so much time there. So sometimes we find the Buddha replying to a question. Sometimes we find the Buddha speaking spontaneously without waiting for a question. Sometimes it's said that the Buddha would come to the door of his lodging, his hut, or pavilion or whatever, and he would call the monks around him and tell them something. It's as though as he was sitting there on his own in his hut or in his pavilion and something would occur to him, some thought, some idea, some reflection, something that the monks needed to know. So he'd get up and go to the door and call them. So from their huts they'd all come thronging round and then he would say this, that, or the other. So we are not given this sort of information on this occasion, but it may well have happened like that. But in any case he speaks apparently spontaneously. He says, "Bhikkhus, when a word has four qualities, it is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, it is not blameworthy, nor blamed by the wise."

So, "Bhikkhus, when a word has four qualities it is well spoken". Subhasita. Now this is the word of the title, the Subhasita Sutta. Well spoken, happily spoken, not ill-spoken. The opposite is dubbhasita, you know, "su" and "du", positive and negative prefixes. "It is not blameworthy." Let's see what blameworthy is. Anavajja - not blameworthy, not susceptible to criticism. Ananuvajja ca vinnunan - vinnunan is translated as wise; it means those who know, those who understand, those who are intelligent. And this is something that you get again and again in the Pali texts. That which is not blamed by the intelligent man or not criticized by intelligent men. And this is considered to be a very important criterion. Very often it is said you should not do such and such thing. Why? Because it would be blamed by intelligent men, and this is quite significant. I mean very often in the West we might be told you shouldn't do such and such a thing because God would be displeased or God would be angry. Or even you might say, well don't do anything which the Buddha would disapprove of. But no, you don't get that [98] sort of idiom in the Pali texts. The expression that you get is not to do something which intelligent men, if they knew about you doing it, would blame you for. Now what does this suggest? Or what is the general significance of this?

Voice: Buddhism respects intelligence.

S: Yes. First of all it respects intelligence.

Voice: The criterion isn't approval or disapproval, your yardstick is wisdom and skilful means.

S: Yes. Also it means that you yourself have a healthy respect for others who are intelligent, who are wise, your peers in a sense, but who are more advanced more experienced, more intelligent than you are. I think that it is important though to distinguish this from conformity to the opinion or the attitude of the group, yes? You see the difference?

Voice: So it doesn't imply the same as passing the eleven plus or that sort of intelligence?

S: No, I don't think it does, no. Vinnunan - just those who know.

Devamitra: That point is in fact made very strongly in the Kalama Sutta.

S: Yes, right.

Devamitra: But it's also a point that very often gets ignored.

S: Yes that is true. Of course there is the question, "Who are the wise?" But really you know that. I mean, or who are the intelligent. You know that from your experience of them over the years, perhaps. You know that they are more experienced, more insightful than yourself. So

you have a sort of regular respect for their views and their opinions. And if you are, you know, thinking of doing something and then if it occurs to you that they would not approve of that, then that acts as a check. This is nothing to do though [99] with a manipulation or a feeling of guilt; it's a healthy respect for the feelings and the opinions and the judgements even of an action or situation of those who, though in a sense they are your peers, are somewhat more experienced and more intelligent and insightful than you are yourself. You notice the Buddha doesn't invoke a sort of big weighty father figure, either in the form of God or guru or himself. He doesn't even say the Buddha wouldn't like it or the Buddha wouldn't approve of it. He doesn't even say don't do something that you think the Buddha wouldn't like you to do. No. It isn't made as heavy as that. It's the wise, the intelligent, the people with whom you are in contact and who are more experienced and more full of insight than you are yourself. In other words...

Voice: Which is more useful because you can't imagine the Buddha often, but you can imagine a more intelligent friend.

S: Right, yes, or a number of intelligent friends. And also this implies within the specifically Buddhist context of the Sangha, yes? Or, I mean, within the context of the Friends it implies the Order. So, for instance, you're in contact with all the members of your local chapter of the Order. Maybe there's eight, maybe there's ten, maybe there's twelve of them. You know them pretty well. You know what their standards are. You know what their attitudes are. You know what the standards and attitudes of the spiritual community as a whole are. So if you become conscious that you are falling short of that, you are not living up to that, that a certain action of yours is not in harmony with that, you have a feeling that they are not going to be very happy about that. Not that they are a group bringing pressure to bear on you as an individual. Not that they are being authoritarian, no. But that they will just not be happy that one of their brothers or one of their fellows is just not living up to what everybody is trying to live up to. You will be conscious in a non-guilty sort of way of a ... not exactly disapproval coming from them, but that no, they are just not happy with it. They don't agree with it, they would not like you to do that particular thing. So that acts as a check on you. And this is what is called hiri, which is a very important virtue in Buddhism. Hiri or hrih usually translated as a sense of shame. If you think, well, other [100] Order members wouldn't like me to do that. Not that they're coming it heavy on me but that they have my real welfare at heart, they want me to grow, they want me to develop along with them, we all want to grow together. But they see that you are doing something that is not going to help you in that way. So they just feel sorry, they feel sad to see you behaving in that way. And you're conscious of that and that pulls you up, that checks you. So you see what is implied here, by this phrase? It is not blameworthy, not blamed by the wise. Don't think of it in terms of wise old men or anything like that. Even the word wise has sometimes a slightly not altogether positive ring. It's intelligent people. I mean don't do anything that other intelligent Order members wouldn't be happy with.

Voice: It suggests something else. That if you, going from day to day, and certain situations occur, certain ways of behaving occur to you, and then also at the same time the person who knows, who you know, who knows best in that sort of situation, you can almost ... you can anticipate what they're going to say, it suggests that you know much more than you really think you do.

S: Right, or that you allow yourself to know, as it were, that you do know. If you know that they are not going to approve, well, you know that you ought not to be doing that particular thing.

Voice: You reflect in fact your better nature of your image of them.

S: Yes, that's a very good way of putting it, yes. But of course here it is the sangha, it is the spiritual community, it's not just a group. Not even just your social group.

Voice: And you'd also, if you do work in this fashion, you'll go for intelligence. When you want advice you'll go for intelligence and not comfort.

S: Right. Well I've noticed this in certain occasions within the Order, that when the Order as a whole considers something, or expresses a sort of consensus of opinion with regard to a certain person. I've noticed when they do it seriously it's very very fair and very accurate, and that person would be very well advised not to ignore that, in fact to act upon it. [101] So one becomes aware of this, you intuit, you pick up what the Order in this instance is going to say or think, because you are reflecting, you know, back from your own better nature, your own real understanding. You always know or very nearly always know. It's not often that you are in real perplexity and don't know at all. You really usually do know.

Voice: And hence the resentment when you still don't do it. And then people then pour all this resentment onto the Order. Regard them as a group.

S: Yes, right, yes.

Voice: Ah, that's very interesting because this sort of... it begins to suggest that you in fact carry the Order around inside you the whole time.

Voice: All the Order?

Voice: And then it's not really a good way of putting it but...

S: Well you have an image of the Order.

Voice: Well it's almost as if you know these people much better than you think, although they may, or else they represent all those various aspects of your own intelligence. But you can't, you haven't quite, maybe this is getting a bit too psychological, but maybe you haven't integrated all those aspects. You see what I mean? So they're useful images to, as you said, mirror your own... Because I know that quite often in dreams you'll get cropping up various people and they say various things... very interesting.

S: And as I mentioned earlier on you do know who the wise are because you do know who are the intelligent people, because you've had a contact with them over a long period of time. You can't know it just at once. I mean the Buddha says in another passage it is not easy to know who is a wise man and who is not. One knows who is wise, who is intelligent only after living with a man and that [102] over a long period of time. And then he says also that it takes a wise man to know a wise man. But the advantage of having this sort of check, even if other people are really no more experienced and no more intelligent than you, everybody has his ups and downs. And sometimes you may be in danger of doing something which anybody might be in danger of, but at that particular moment it's you who are in danger of doing it, they are not. But they can see the situation objectively, you can't. Tomorrow one of them might be involved in that kind of situation and you might be in the position of being more intelligent and giving the good advice. So it isn't necessarily a whole group of people much more highly developed than you are, it's just your own peer group, spiritually speaking.

So that is much more healthy perhaps, this sort of check, than just one sort of remote father figure, whether up in the sky or down on the earth or hovering somewhere in between. And also here there aren't or there shouldn't be the same feelings of guilt invoked and manipulated. You just have a healthy respect for the opinion of fellow members of the spiritual community. And you have not only a healthy respect for it but a confidence in their serious considered and unanimous judgement. You know that it cannot be but for your own good, you have that confidence in them. So sometimes you're prepared to follow that rather than your own judgement. And even the recollection of the way in which you know that they would think, or you know that they would size up a situation, just gives you pause. You stop and think and maybe you don't do that thing. You know that it would not be approved or that people wouldn't be very happy about it. I mean the word approval isn't even a very positive thing perhaps, but you know what I mean, yes? So this criterion is often mentioned in the Buddhist texts. Not to do anything for which a wise man, or the wise in general, the intelligent in general, would blame you if he saw, or if he knew.

Chintamani: This thing on the authority figure. I've heard it said that, I think you said that the Old Testament God is the apotheosis of will, or one's own will.

S: I don't remember saying that but I might have done or could have done.

Chintamani: So presumably... How does one set about breaking down this, or getting an intelligent view of what to do and what [103] not to do and getting away from this sort of - this whatever it is, sort of shaking his finger at you all the time?

S: Well, one shouldn't think just in terms of getting away from that but of developing a much more healthy counterpart to that. Ignoring that, or if you can't ignore it just say to your fellow Order members or friends in general well this is what my ridiculous superego conscience is telling me, what do you say? And let them, you know, laugh your superego conscience out of court as it were and say well that's ridiculous.

Ratnapani: Quite often I think they might just agree.

S: Hmm. No I don't think I'd be quite as cynical as that.

Ratnapani: No?

S: No.

Ratnapani: Because doesn't one also project the other side of you that really knows in all directions and you can stick it on God or daddy or whatever as well?

S: I think nowadays we very rarely, certainly those within the Movement, would project what we really know onto God or a father figure. I think it's much more likely to be reflected back onto us from the sangha, from the spiritual community.

Ratnapani: You don't think we would do that? You don't think we would project what we really know.

S: Onto a God the father figure? I doubt this very much.

Voice: No because then you might do it, you know, if it is a right thing you're projecting onto it then you're likely to follow and build up this kind of God.

S: Yes. Well I think if you tended to do this well then you wouldn't be a Buddhist at all, yes? You would just be outside and you would have stayed outside. [104] It's a sort of healthy check of public opinion in the most positive sense. But that assumes of course that the public itself is healthy and, you know, the public in general obviously is not. But certainly one's own little public consisting of the Movement, the Friends, and the Order should be very much more healthy and therefore much more in a position to act as that sort of check for oneself. Anyway perhaps that's enough on that. Let's look into the well-spoken speech itself.

"Herein a bhikkhu speaks goodly words, not evil words; speaks Dharma, not otherwise; speaks kindly not unkindly; speaks the truth, not what is not false. Monks (or bhikkhus), when a word has these four qualities it is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, it is not blameworthy, nor blamed by the wise."

All right, let's look at these qualities. "Herein a monk speaks goodly words, not evil words". This seems to be a bit repetitious. What do you think are meant by goodly words? Well-spoken words? In what sense or in what way is a word well spoken?

Voice: Useful. It's a useful, you know...

S: Yes. This is something that isn't mentioned in this particular enumeration, but usefulness.

In some accounts of perfect speech, especially in the context of the Eightfold Path, usefulness is mentioned.

Ratnapani: Since it's juxtaposed with "evil words" I presume the well said is that which doesn't hurt, which doesn't cause discomfort.

S: Yes. Though again, later on it says there is kindly speech, not unkindly. Sometimes it is said that the well-spoken word is the word which is tactful, which is timely, you know, which is appropriate. Which is well put, well presented, yes? This perhaps refers more to the manner of presentation. That you don't put anybody off the content of what you are saying by your manner of saying it. Your manner is polite, courteous, harmonious, agreeable.

Voice: Sensitive.[105]

S: Sensitive. Yes. I think that well-spoken here refers to all those sorts of qualities. That even if you've got something quite hard to say, something which you know that particular person is going to find difficult to accept, you'll put it in a very tactful and even gentle way to begin with, so you don't get a sharp reaction against what you are trying to say. So I think subhasita is to be understood in this sort of way, in this kind of context. So, "herein a bhikkhu speaks goodly words, not evil words. Speaks Dharma, not otherwise." This of course is very important. What do you think is meant by speaking Dharma?

Devamitra: To refer back to the discussion on communication yesterday, communicating that aspect of you which is in harmony with the Dharma.

S: Yes, because you notice it isn't speaking about the Dharma. Do you notice this point? It is not speaking about the Dharma, it is speaking Dharma, yes? So what is the difference between speaking about the Dharma and speaking Dharma?

Chintamani: Speaking Dharma is that which is, has, is directly useful to your own and others' growth and speaking about Dharma is vague philosophizing.

S: Something like that. Yes. Speaking about the Dharma means conveying information.

Devamitra: Yes, but that can also be useful.

S: But that can be useful, certainly, in the sense that that will get you going. In fact, I think that probably you always have to start off speaking about the Dharma before you can speak Dharma, yes?

Voice: Dharma comes from experience.

S: Well no, I don't mean just in the course of a...

Voice: It stimulates the flow in a way.

S: It stimulates the flow, yes. If you meet someone, you have [106] to start talking about Buddhism, to use that word. You can't start talking Buddhism, you can't start talking Dharma straight away. You have to start talking about it and about... But then you start speaking it. Then the flow really begins and you're directly expressing what you think and feel. You are one with the Dharma so you speak Dharma, but to get into that mood and that sort of state of mind you have initially to speak about the Dharma, talk about the Dharma. Or even talk about very ordinary things, and then talk about the Dharma, and then talk Dharma. This is what usually happens. It is only very rarely, when the situation is right and the other person is very much in tune with you, very receptive, that you can speak Dharma straight out like the Buddha seems to have been able to speak Dharma straight out, because the bhikkhus were around. They were receptive, they were very eager to hear. So he didn't have to beat about the bush. He just said, "Bhikkhus, when a word has four qualities it is well spoken," just as the

thought had come to him. No preamble, no introduction, no sort of loosening up, just straight out speaking Dharma. But one could say even here this is not a perfect example of speaking Dharma because the Buddha is in a way speaking about right speech. So it's not sort of perfect communication.

Voice: Can you think of any examples where he does speak Dharma directly?

S: Well, for instance, in the famous verses in which he spoke of himself immediately after his Enlightenment, you know, when he was accosted by a brahmin [sic. This seems to be a reference to Majjhima Nikaya 26: the story of Upaka the ascetic, which Bhante sometimes confuses with the story of Dona the brahmin in Anguttara Nikaya 4, tr.]. In those sort of verses when he really speaks straight out from his own - not only his own experience, but his own highest experience, ultimate experience - he's giving full expression to his own enlightened being. Or I say full expression, but as full as the hearer can take.

So, speaking Dharma. It's very important to distinguish this from speaking about Dharma. When you really speak Dharma you communicate, as Chintamani said, that aspect of yourself which is in harmony with the Dharma, which is at one with the Dharma. And the more you are in harmony with the Dharma, the more you are united with the Dharma as it were, the more truly and the more fully you can speak Dharma. And sometimes you are united, as it were, momentarily, you have your inspired moments where you [107] can really speak out and you can really speak Dharma. You may not be able to do it the next day but at least you can do it today; at least you've risen to that for the time being.

Voice: There's a sort of dry, almost agony sometimes in a study group being asked to talk about the Dharma and there's the information and not the Dharma sort of flowing through you to convey it.

S: This is why I prefer the study in a retreat situation within the Friends and especially within the Order, rather than the more general situation outside where one is sure to be asked something like "Was the Buddha born in China?" or "How many skandhas are there?" Well there's not much room for real communication there, but more and more within the Order and among the Friends there is.

So it is indeed quite painful to be asked to purvey information when one is ready to communicate the Dharma and when the person who's asking doesn't seem to want the Dharma, not yet. Just wants information about the Dharma, even quite secondary or tertiary information, either historical or biographical or literary or chronological or even numismatic variety, yes? (laughter)

Voice: What does numismatic mean?

S: The study of coins. (laughter) Oh yes, the study of coins is quite important for the development of the history of Buddhism. You can find out which kings were reigning when and where, and you can even infer their degree of connection with Buddhism from some of their images on their coins, et cetera, et cetera. And some people are very interested in these things and you may be asked about them. (laughter) And you're itching, almost, to communicate the Dharma. And I think that one always knows when that happy transition occurs, when you're no longer talking about the Dharma but when you're talking Dharma, communicating Dharma, or exchanging Dharma or sharing Dharma, and you always know that.

So, speaking Dharma. "Speaks kindly not unkindly." What's the... it's piya. It's more like affectionately, affectionate. It's not kindly in the sense of compassionately, it's affectionately, affectionately in a good positive sense. Very often of course, in Pali, piya, affection, is used in a very negative sense indeed, as in the Dhammapada, and contrasted with metta. Metta is real, [108] genuine, warm, friendliness, whereas affection is a sort of clinging attachment. But here piya, affection, is used in the positive sense.

Voice: How do you spell piya?

S: P-i-y-a, or in Sanskrit, priya. It's priya vacana. This is considered very important for the Bodhisattva, the loving or affectionate speech. So what is this loving or affectionate speech?

Chintamani: Well to begin with you're not trying to hit the other person over the head with what you have got to say. It's for their benefit not yours.

Voice: Courteous, being courteous.

S: It includes courteousness, true. It means you really like the other person and you really want to say something beneficial and helpful and true. You're not only concerned with what you are saying, you are concerned with the person to whom you are saying it.

Voice: And you're not trying to say, not trying to prove how wise you are.

S: Right, yes. Affectionate speech of course doesn't mean a very sort of sugary sweetness of speech.

Voice: It's kind of like acknowledging the other person.

S: Yes, and so feeling for the other person. I mean acknowledging would be covered by awareness but there must be some feeling too, some fellow feeling, some warmth, some sympathy, some liking even, affectionateness.

Voice: Presumably this is referring to a state where there is metta within the individual and to speak to someone is to let that metta out.

S: Yes. Or there is just metta. So when you encounter individuals [109] the metta is naturally directed towards those individuals and your communication with them is full of metta. I think what we must avoid here is thinking that affectionate speech is necessarily affectionate in the sort of sentimental way. You're not necessarily trying to please people or butter them up, or anything of that sort. You can be speaking affectionately but very firmly and even sternly. And you can be saying what that particular person doesn't particularly like to hear, or want to hear. But you can still speak affectionately.

Devamitra: I know the points been made many times previously but it still seems that it is not really accepted, and that is, for instance, very often I speak very bluntly and am resented for it, being considered as being highly insensitive and all the rest of it.

S: So I mean do you agree with that or do you think that is an unjustifiable criticism?

Devamitra: I think it's unjustifiable.

S: Has anyone else encountered that sort of thing in speaking to people? That they rebut what you are saying by describing it as insensitive.

Chintamani: Well the first thing that occurred to me actually when you said that was that I know what you mean, but also if something is spoken with good feeling, genuine good feeling, I don't think it really can be taken like that unless by some really screwed-up person. And that, well, one has to be one's own... only oneself can tell what one's motives are for saying something.

S: And if they were as screwed-up as that, probably even your genuinely affectionate though blunt speech is not going to do them much good. They're not very likely to listen, or not going to be very likely to listen.

Voice: I feel it's somewhere in the middle where there's not as much tact or sensitivity as one

would like to see there, but there isn't as little as people say there is in their rebuttal, so that it, you know, you're not as tactful or sensitive as you [110] could be, you're loud voiced and quite, you know, come over rather strong. The other person's feeling a bit guilty, they're going to feel like ... and then amplify it and feeling it even worse. So, as Chintamani said, if you were nothing but warm then they couldn't take it amiss.

Chintamani: You see, speaking from personal experience what I think happens is that you, in the long run, you feel you do have general welfare, you do consider general welfare in the long run, ultimately. But here and now I find what quite often happens is that things arise, sort of ideas that would be useful to other people. But in the here and now situation you aren't quite sorted out so what you try to do is to, say, wave a bit of information around and put it over with a bit of selfishness, although in the long run you don't really want to do that, but here and now you are a bit ... trying to hit people over the head with it or one is trying to hit people over the head with it.

Voice: Well it's not always that you are in a very good state or perfect state. There's always going to be a bit, there's always going to...

S: Well, people should make allowances in the light of what they know about your character in general. If they know for instance that you always speak loudly, well it seems ridiculous to take that seriously or make much of a point of it when you're obviously speaking to them with real good will. They ought to know that you always do speak a bit loudly and just discount that. Or if you know that someone always speaks softly it's not necessarily because he's scared - he just always speaks softly, so you make allowances for that. Whereas in the case of someone else who normally spoke some other way, well if they started speaking softly you'd think that there was some reason for it. That's right? In the same way if somebody raised his voice who normally didn't speak as loudly as that well yes, maybe he is a bit angry. If you speak in your usual loud manner well that's just your manner of speaking, that doesn't mean that you're angry, and people should recognize that. Or it doesn't mean that you're not being affectionate, or not speaking with affection; it's just your general style. But again if they're really screwed up and getting really reactive they won't be able to reflect in that sort of way. So perhaps one should [111] be very mindful of that in the case of such persons and maybe deliberately lower one's voice or tone down what one is saying a bit.

Devamitra: Actually what I'm getting at is not that I feel very often that the individuals that I am communicating with are very screwed up, but it's just a sort of refusal to acknowledge my communication in a way. And it gets sort of glanced off and sort of dismissed.

S: Well if their reaction is of this kind, I'd say they were quite screwed up, especially if they know you, if they can't just make allowances for your manner or your little bit of extra loudness, and use that as excuse to refuse to recognize or accept what you have to say. If in fact that is the situation, then they must be quite a bit screwed up - at least in certain areas, in certain respects or as in relation to you. And that would need looking into quite seriously.

Devamitra: Well then it occurs to me, then, that there are quite a few people in that situation, are screwed up in regards relating to me.

S: Well if that is the case then that is something that you have to bear in mind and try to work on with them when you get an opportunity. And meanwhile be extra careful, extra tactful, and extra mindful.

So "speaks kindly, not unkindly". Sometimes it's very difficult to combine speaking the truth with speaking kindly. Has anyone ever experienced that?

Voice: Yes.

S: I mean to say something really in a sense harsh, very hard, but, you know, having to put it kindly at the same time.

Voice: I often find that I don't know exactly what I feel about it until I open my mouth. And then I find just what the emotion is, so a tactful planned situation to put something difficult over suddenly becomes me being quite nasty or upset about it. [112]

S: I think humour often helps. I can often say things in a joking way which will sink in. You know, the little bite or little sting is there in the midst of the humour, but you put across what you really want to say. But it is wrapped up in humour so that people can't take it amiss.

Voice: Well some people can do that.

S: Yes, but also to be humorous you must be quite relaxed. If you're a bit tense and a bit worked up yourself you can't be humorous can you?

Voice: No you can be very, very nasty.

S: You can't pass it off with a joke or else it will come out very cynical indeed. (laughter) Which is not quite what is wanted.

Voice: A bit like one of those dum dum bullets: it goes in all right and throws bits of metal in all directions.

S: Well, "Speaks the truth, not what is false." Now speaking the truth is as we just said a simple straightforward business, but do you think it really is?

Voice: No it's very difficult.

S: Why is it difficult? What makes it difficult?

Voice: Well, I mean, how much of the truth do you know yourself?

S: Yes but I mean, even to speak that little bit that you do know, is that difficult or easy?

Voice: It's quite difficult.

S: But what makes it difficult?

Voice: I think one does not want to admit where one's at. So often little things come in, little lies to boost oneself up, tiny little things.[113]

S: Yes. So why don't you want to admit where you're at?

Voice: Because you're afraid of getting disapproval from other people.

S: Yes. I think this is a very important thing, that people don't speak the truth, that is to say, communicate what they really think and feel out of fear of disapproval. I think this goes on all the time and that all sorts of factors are at work in the world just to prevent you from saying what you really think and feel.

Voice: Some of the things that most of us think and feel would be classified as illegal I'm sure.

S: But lots of people are not afraid of illegality, but quite a few are afraid of unconventionality.

Voice: Quite a lot of people have got a lot of strength over you, a lot of power over you.

S: Yes.

Voice: ... make a man feel really small.

Voice: The other thing is ... demands that one is sort of constantly mindful of oneself and knowing when one is just reacting to a situation. That's pretty hard.

S: I remember when I was in India I had one or two rather unpleasant experiences which gave me much food for thought and reflection, when I wasn't allowed to write what I had wanted to write. Once was when I was editing the Maha Bodhi Journal - there were several instances, but I'll give you just one of them - I used to write a monthly editorial and when the Chinese invaded Tibet I wanted to say what I thought about that and I wrote my editorial. But it was suppressed. It was suppressed by the governing body of the Maha Bodhi Journal. Why? They didn't want to upset the Government of India. Why didn't they want to upset the government of India? Because some of the members [114] of the governing body had their own little axes to grind and wanted to keep on good terms with certain members of the Government of India. It was all just a boot-licking operation. And therefore my editorial was suppressed just in case it upset some of these people. And this was supposed to be the leading Buddhist journal! So the leading Buddhist journal did not speak out on that occasion. I was muzzled. I felt very badly about that, and that was just one instance, one example, one experience that I had. And I said to my friend, one is not allowed to speak the truth, even by a Buddhist organization. And these were mostly not Buddhists, they were Hindus who had gained control of the governing body of the Maha Bodhi Society in Calcutta. They didn't want to upset the government of India because that might get in the way of some of their own little perks and privileges. I got really disgusted by that.

Voice: It's quite general about India though.

S: I'm afraid so, yes. On another occasion an article I wrote wasn't published because I'd ventured to criticize Aldous Huxley, very mildly, and this particular organization didn't want to criticize Aldous Huxley because Aldous Huxley was a supporter of the Vedanta, so he couldn't be criticized, yes? So my article wasn't published. Anyway, it is going to be published by the Friends shortly. (laughter) [This is a reference to *The Religion of Art*, tr.] That was written twenty-five years ago. So anyway I kept it, didn't give up, and it will see the light of day shortly but after a quarter of a century practically. No maybe it was a little less than 25 years, but well over 20 anyway - about 22-23 years. But, you see, one is not allowed to speak the truth. Well, at least, one is not allowed to say what one thinks or feels, leave aside the question of whether it is actually true, you know, there may be a difference of opinion. But one is not allowed to say what one feels and what one thinks very often.

On another occasion I was criticized for daring to criticize a certain Pali scholar, because the Pali scholar was so well known. There was no criticism of what I had actually said, or no reference to the actual point of the criticism, but that I had dared, being a young Buddhist bhikkhu, to criticize this eminent person, as though I had no right to criticize this person, and that really surprised me. And I was criticized for this by other [115] Buddhists. That I had no right to say what I thought and what I felt, but no reference to the merits of the question or the merits of my criticism whatever. I just apparently had no right to make that criticism, which again struck me as something extraordinary.

Voice: That's almost like a class thing.

S: Yes, right.

Voice: You've got to know your place.

S: Yes, right. Indeed, you've got to know your place.

Voice: And also more often than not that also serves to actually put oneself out of touch with what one really feels.

S: Yes.

Voice: You just don't know that you know much more than you...

S: Yes, right. Well it didn't put me out of touch with my own feelings I must say. My own feelings were, if anything, considerably intensified by all these experiences. So for me personally, sort of one of the happiest pieces of the Friends is that I can increasingly say what I think and what I feel, at least to a small circle of people - maybe not to the world at large but certainly to some people, in fact to a growing number of people, what I really think and what I really feel. But, I mean, I notice that people don't want to, they don't like you to, do this. I happened to remark a few years ago to someone that I spent an hour or two with (that) a certain person and had felt really bored. So this person said, "Oh no Bhante, you couldn't have felt bored, could you?" I said, "Yes, I was bored." And they were quite shocked that they felt that I couldn't or shouldn't ever feel bored with anybody. That they wanted me to deny that I had that feeling, didn't want me to have that feeling. But I insisted that, yes, I was bored. And I had to insist on that. Otherwise I might have said, well yes, "No, I wasn't really bored, I was just joking, you know, I really quite enjoyed it." (laughter) But I'm supposed to be floating in some sort of sublime state of equanimity and [116] not feeling bored. This is what that person wanted to feel or think. So I had to insist that, no, I was bored by that person for a whole hour or two hours. So in this way people try all the time to make you deny your own thoughts and your own feelings. So how do you end up being able to speak the truth? Because you lose contact with your own thoughts and your own feelings. So you must speak the truth as you see it, as you feel it, as you know it, right or wrong. The rights and wrongs can be sorted out afterwards, whether what you have said is right, or whether you had any business to be thinking and feeling in that way. But at least you must speak it if you feel the need to speak.

Voice: Otherwise it builds up.

S: Otherwise it builds up or it goes sour or goes rotten or you just lose contact completely, and it just sort of submerges and goes underground and you don't know any longer what you really think and what you really feel. And that is a terrible alienated state to be in. It's much better to think and feel that you're a real devil than not to be sure what you do think and feel.

Voice: I remember once sitting on a train and there was, a couple of seats behind me, where there were two chaps, one who liked curry and one who didn't. And the one who liked curry was trying to persuade the other one that he must also like curry. And he was going on and on and on about the merits of curry and this chap was saying, "Well yes, but I don't like curry," and being sort of beaten further and further into a corner.

S: But even that is not so bad to try and prove that someone should like something. But the harm is really done when they try to prove that you do like it!

Voice: I think he was just waiting for him to say, "Well yes, curry is wonderful actually."

S: Probably it was a softening up process. But then people tell you what you think, tell you what you feel. So I think it is very important to be honest with oneself about one's thoughts and feelings.[117]

Voice: So it's in that sense given. Well leaving aside others' a bit more dubious kind of utterance and communication, it's better to carry on saying things until you're either told to shut up. Well then you carry on even further, but until you're proved to be wrong, you just keep going.

S: Well of course it depends why you are saying those particular things. I mean you can be saying (things) compulsively and therefore neurotically. One is trying to speak the truth, which one is trying to communicate. One is trying to share. One is not insisting. So this is also one of the aspects of this life at home. Home from other points of view is the place where you cannot speak the truth, the place where you're not permitted to speak the truth. So when

you are permitted to speak the truth, when you find yourself in a situation among people where you can speak the truth and really say what you think and feel, you experience a tremendous sense of freedom and liberation and expansion. At once there is more space, as it were. You can expand and you can fly.

So this is another aspect of the going forth. The more you go forth the more you can speak the truth. We all know that you can't really say what you think and feel to your parents or your brothers and sisters or older friends. You don't want to hurt their feelings. At the same time you don't want to bottle up what you really think and feel. So you have to move into a wider context, a wider environment, where you are free to speak the truth, say what you feel, say what you think.

Voice: Yes, sometimes there's no point in insisting on saying what you think and feel is there? Because it just...

S: Because, don't forget, the truth is part of communication, it's within the context of communication, otherwise it's just a statement of a fact - yes? - which is a different kind of thing. Sometimes it's not just that you can't speak the truth but that no communication is possible. You can't speak the truth because you can't communicate. The situation does not permit communication. So in a situation that does not permit a communication it is foolish to try and speak the truth. You're just wasting your time. All that will come forth will be facts and you'll just get a completely wrong, alienated feeling, because you're presenting as facts what to you are truths. And this is often what [118] one has to do when dealing with beginners: when you are forced to present as facts what you feel and experience as truths. So "speaks the truth" is not all that easy is it? But to know the truth, then to be able to express that, be able to communicate that, even in certain small particulars.

So: "Bhikkhus, when a word has these four qualities, it is well spoken, not ill spoken; it is not blameworthy nor blamed by the wise. Thus spake the Master," the bhagavan, "and when he had thus spoken the Wellfarer," sugata, "spake again as teacher," sattva.

So what does he say as teacher? "The goodly word calm men proclaim supreme." He summarizes his own words in a little verse. The first line is quite interesting, the rest a simple summary. "Subhasitam uttamam ahu santo". That which is well spoken, and the well spoken here is not just the first of the four qualities of well spoken speech. It's the perfect speech in general "uttamam ahu santo". Thus say the wise, the peaceful. The peaceful say well-spoken words are supreme. "Subhasitam uttamam ahu santo". This word santo means those who have become peaceful, those who have become calm. What does Hare say? Calm men, yes. But it's not just calm men in the ordinary sense, peaceful. Do you think there is any reason why this particular epithet is useful here? Why does the Buddha say that peaceful men, calm men, say that goodly speech is supreme? Why not wise men? Why calm men? Do you think there's any reason?

Voice: Because they're calm or clear enough to be able to see what is...

S: Yes, this santa is a sort of very general term for the not just peaceful and calm, but the spiritually developed person. Sometimes it's translated as saint, which isn't really very good. So, such people, such men, the calm, the peaceful, the spiritually developed, they say that well-spoken speech is supreme. You can look at this in two ways, either supreme among the different ways of speech, or just supreme. Perhaps even it is just supreme, not even among different types of speech. In other words it draws attention to the great importance of authentic [119] communication. You could say not just subhasita but you could paraphrase that: not just goodly words but authentic communication or real communication, real communication is supreme. This is what the spiritually developed say. So looking at it in that way why do you think that real communication is given this high position? Why is real communication so important?

V: I can see it almost as a symptom, in as much as you can't have real communication unless

you have so many other qualities.

S: Yes.

Voice: Unless there's real communication then there's no communication at all.

S: Yes. I mean real communication suggests the communication of something real. Or you could say that real communication is communication in reality, the reality being your awareness of the person to whom or with whom you're communicating and his awareness of you. That is the reality within which you communicate and that communication is real communication. So if real communication implies that sort of mutual awareness - and awareness and mutual awareness is obviously very, very important from the standpoint of individual development - then the fact that you can really communicate, even if it is only occasionally, suggests that you are already in a sense on quite a high level. So real communication is indeed supreme. But does one very often experience that? Well obviously one doesn't; it depends upon all sorts of factors: your own particular state, your own particular mood, the person that you are trying to communicate with, the overall situation. Depends on so many factors. Whether you have got enough time, even mundane things like that. Whether you've got even the peace to communicate. Do you think communication is necessarily verbal? Real communication. What are the other alternatives?

Voice: Well art is one. Art could be termed communication. Art, music, you know, in that sense.

S: In a very broad sense, yes, but I'm thinking more one to one communication which is usually more intensive.[120]

Voice: Somebody's presence. How they act.

S: Somebody's presence, how they act. What else do you think?

Voice: I suppose the whole spectrum of communication starts with the physical and then gradually you pull away more and more, it gets more and more refined - physical, verbal, mental.

S: Even purely telepathic as it were. And of course you can communicate through work can't you? Maybe that's included in action or physical. So one shouldn't identify communication too exclusively with words, with verbal communication. One can communicate through a look. A look sometimes can tell you quite a lot and can say quite a lot. But here of course verbal communication is particularly in the Buddha's mind apparently.

Voice: I think on that score, quite often, there's nothing that gets in the way of real communication so much as people's so-called communication.

S: Would you like to enlarge upon that, or maybe Devamitra would.

Devamitra: I just recently had an experience. I took a weekend retreat with the Norfolk Friends about three weeks ago and we had communication exercises just for an hour one day. There was somebody on that who was quite shaken by the exercises and he realized afterwards that what he had hitherto considered as communication was a sort of personality which he presented towards other people generally, and that he tried to communicate with this personality in the communication exercises and it completely fell down. And he was left in a very, very insecure position, he felt. I don't know if that was what you were going to say but it just sparked that off when you said that.

Voice: Yes, something like that. The whole thing of, as Bhante said earlier, if you are brought up long enough in a situation where what you really think and feel is not acceptable, then if you are insecure enough to not be able to stand within that, in your own right, maybe just shut

up and not bother about whether you're getting approval or not. You may then proceed to fabricate [121] another cardboard copy of what you really think and feel. A sort of (?), an act which you then proceed to meet the world with, which is not really ... in a sense it's you but it's a sort of imitation of you. What this act says is quite often quite convincing and it may actually have some of the real feelings in it, but there's a gap between you and world.

S: And you and it.

Voice: And you and it. And then you proceed to go around with this act, which is generally sort of acceptable. Maybe it's nice and it's friendly or apparently friendly, full of energy and outgoing. But in fact it's not you at all and really a sensitive person can pick that up.

S: And this is also tied up with the confusion between real ability to communicate and a certain superficial glibness and fluency, such as professional communicators - ironic term - often have. And if someone is a bit slow of speech or doesn't speak very much perhaps, then it might be said that he doesn't communicate very well or he doesn't communicate very easily, which is just rubbish. You don't necessarily communicate better because you talk a lot or talk vigorously, or very skilful in the use of words. It's got very little to do with those things.

Voice: It could in fact suggest the opposite.

S: Yes. It could be a big cover operation. I sometimes cite the example of a woman I knew. At that time she was in her early eighties and she couldn't stop talking. She was a very high powered or strong willed professional woman. Canadian by, well she was British by birth but had lived most of her life in Canada and worked there. And she was an absolutely compulsive talker. She came to see me in Kalimpong. Then she moved to Darjeeling. I remember spending a few days in Darjeeling and going to see her. And she invited me to spend the day with her and said that I must have breakfast with her and then stay for lunch and then have dinner in the evening. And without a word of exaggeration she talked uninterruptedly the whole time. It must have been about fourteen or fifteen hours, she didn't stop once. And I could hardly get [122] a word in edgeways. And she did this with everybody. But it wasn't really communication, of course. She was telling you. She was imposing her views and opinions very strongly, not to say dogmatically, held. But anyway I found out what was at the bottom of it all. Eventually after some years she got around to telling another friend of mine what she had apparently really been wanting to say all the time, but found it quite impossible for years and years to get around to saying, which was that she had murdered her husband. And it was that that she was trying to get around to, and eventually she told this other friend of ours, that this in fact is what she had done. And I was sure that this was the reason for her compulsive talking. She was always trying to get round to the point, always trying to make a confession, but never being able to bring herself to do it. Seemingly she'd been a medical woman, a doctor, and she'd just given her husband an overdose one day because she just got fed up with him and all his wicked ways. He was a real rotter she said, a real waster, no good at all. And she said lots of things of that sort, but in the end she confessed that she had given him an overdose deliberately and she had killed him. And it is that, I thought, that she'd always wanted to confess.

So sometimes people pseudo-communicate, because they can't bring themselves to the point of real communication. There's something that they're afraid of or are unwilling to say so they just go on talking and talking and talking.

(end of tape four)

All right, so the Buddha says in this first line, "subhasitam uttamam ahu santo", which we may paraphrase as the calm, the peaceful, the truly developed declare that real communication is supreme. The rest of the verse, though it is metrical, is frankly a bit prosaic.

"Dhammam bhane nadhammam, - tam dutiyam", which means the second characteristic of real communication is that it is speaking Dharma and not otherwise. And thirdly it's speaking

affectionately, not speaking unaffectionately, and speaking truth, not falsehood. So this is in a way rather trite, but it is put into metre and it is more easy to remember. Anyway, what happens next? Let's go on and see. Would someone like to read the whole of the rest of the sutta?

"Then the venerable Vangisa, placing his robe on one shoulder, with joined hands saluted the Master with these words: "It has come to me, Wellfarer!" "Declare this thing, Vangisa," replied the Master. And the venerable Vangisa praised the Master before his face in these seemly verses:[123]

(451) Oh, one should speak the word
That seareth not himself,
Nor yet another harms:
That if the goodly word;

(452) Should speak the kindly word,
Words that make others glad,
Words that bear ill to none,
Of others kindly speak.

(453) Truth is the deathless word,
'Tis ancient Dharma this:
They say calm men stand fast
In Dharma, goal and truth.

(454) The Wake proclaims the word
Security, to win
The cool and ill to end:
That is of words supreme!

S: Now who is this Vangisa who has suddenly appeared here?

Voice: A poet bhikkhu.

S: Yes, he's a sort of poet. His name literally means, as far as I recollect, the Lord of Speech, which is Vagishvara in Sanskrit, Vangisa in Pali, Lord of Speech. He is, among the disciples, the one who seems to have the gift of improvising verses. So having heard the Buddha say this, having heard the Buddha first of all talk about goodly speech, or right speech or real communication, and then having heard the Buddha versify his own teaching in this - it must be admitted - not particularly good verse (laughter) - from a purely poetic point of view the Buddha didn't have the real gift of versification - Vangisa places his robe on one shoulder and with joined hands salutes the Master with these words. Why does he place his robe over one shoulder?

Voice: To get it out of the way.

S: No, no. (laughter)

Voice: An act of respect?

S: It's a traditional act of respect.

Voice: Where was it before then?[124]

S: You see, the bhikkhus have traditionally three robes. There's the one round the waist, the one over the shoulder, and then there's a third one, which can be worn like a sort of cloak, covering the shoulders. Or you can put this one also round in this sort of way (demonstrates) so as to cover that shoulder. Now it is not considered respectful to sit in front of a teacher

with this shoulder covered, or to speak to him. So you uncover that, you leave this shoulder bare, and usually bhikkhus perform their puja with this shoulder uncovered if they are very strict and very orthodox. This is connected with Indian tradition. It isn't anything particularly Buddhist really, it just means addressing the Buddha with the customary marks of respect. In South India for instance the old tradition was you never went into a temple with the upper part of the body covered if you were a man. I mentioned this in the Thousand-Petalled Lotus, in connection with one or two of my own visits to South Indian temples. It is not considered respectful to appear before the deity, in the temple, with the upper part of the body covered. So people take off their shirts as they go into the temple. At best they have a little towel over one shoulder. This is just a social custom. So Vangisa, not that he places his robe on one shoulder, it's really that he leaves one shoulder uncovered as a mark of respect, in other words he addresses the Buddha respectfully. This is all that it really means. It's like just taking your hat off before you speak to somebody. "And with joined hands salutes the Master with these words, "It has come to me, Wellfarer." The Pali word is patibhati mam, which is it has occurred to me, it has come. What do you think this suggests, or what impression do you get from this?

Voice: That he understands what was said.

S: No, not just that.

Voice: He's inspired.

S: He's inspired. What's come to him is just what he's going to utter, these verses. "It's come to me." He's an improviser. He doesn't have to think it out, it just spontaneously suddenly comes. So, "it has come to me, it's occurred to me, it's appeared". So what does the Buddha say? "Declare this thing Vangisa." No, that's hopeless, what the Buddha says means, let it come, let it come, let it appear, let it come out. This is what the Buddha is saying, [124a] "replied the Master." The Buddha approves of Vangisa's inspiration, though Vangisa says, hearing the Buddha's words, he's very inspired by what the Buddha says, but he wants to put it in his own way. This is what has come, his own verses enlarging upon, expanding, even beautifying, what the Buddha has said. So he says, "It has come to me", so the Buddha says, "Well, let it come." The Buddha probably recognizes that Vangisa is a better poet than he is and can put his own teaching in a much more attractive and acceptable form, which we find is the case. So what does Vangisa say? "Oh, one should speak the word that seareth not himself, nor yet another harms; that is the goodly word." This is a quite different style from the Buddha's. The Buddha's is rather dry, a bit prosaic, but Vangisa seems to have a bit of the real poetic inspiration. Let's see what it is in Pali:

"Tam eva vacam bhaseyya yay' attanam na tapaye pare ca na vihimseyya ; - sa ve vaca subhasita." Which sounds much better actually. "O one should speak the word that seareth not himself." The word which is translated seareth is tapaye, burn. Which is of course the same word that we get tapas from, the burning or the searing - the burning up of all impurities through spiritual practice. Torment is also quite good. We get this word in the Dhammapada. One who speaks the word that does not torment oneself or inflict suffering upon others, vihimsa. Himsa is violence, is harm, vihimsa is more like cruelty. So what Vangisa is saying is that one should speak the word, the utterance, which does not torment oneself and is not cruel to others, which neither torments oneself nor afflicts others. How can a word which one utters, a word which one speaks, afflict or harm or torment oneself? How do you torment yourself with your words? This is an aspect which the Buddha hasn't mentioned even. What does it mean to torment oneself with one's speech?

Voice: Well if you don't say what you really feel, and say something else, that could be a source of pain.

S: Yes, that's true. I think even more than that.

Voice: Well, consciously or deliberately telling an untruth.

S: That's true, but though that is mentioned, untruth if provided for in another verse. But how do you torment yourself [125] when speaking?

Voice: You run yourself down while talking.

S: You run yourself down while talking yes.

Voice: Or make excuses for it.

S: That too, but that seems not strong enough for tormenting yourself.

Voice: Undermining oneself.

Voice: Can you be more specific there, like give an example?

S: Well, depreciate oneself.

Voice: Like kickback, yes, quite unconsciously.

S: An undercurrent of self-depreciation running through what one says which one doesn't really enjoy, which one in fact even feels quite unhappy about, but one goes on doing it. In this way you can torment yourself with your own speech. Sometimes people do this in a very extreme way. It's almost as if they are punishing themselves by what they say.

Voice: ... interpreted my speech as sort of, hitting myself over the head.

S: I think it's subtler than hitting oneself over the head. It's more like cutting one's own throat.

Voice: Why should one do that?

S: Well, I mean, leaving aside this particular instance but in general terms why should one do this? It must be self hate, self dislike, sort of apologizing for oneself. "Don't take very seriously what I say, after all what am I? Who am I? I'm someone rather dreadful." It's more like that. It has that sort of feeling doesn't it? Why should you run yourself down? Well you just don't think much of yourself. So even if you say something good, [126] even something quite intelligent, at the same time you have to run yourself down and almost apologize for that.

Voice: This could tie up with what I was saying earlier about having been used for so long for not having that better side of oneself not accepted. You come to believe that it is not acceptable.

S: No it's not even a question of acceptable or not acceptable, you probably have been given by other people a very bad image of yourself, you've taken that on. You don't think much of yourself. You have a very low self image. So even when you say something good or if you are communicating quite successfully and sincerely you can't really believe it's you. You can't really believe that you can speak as well as that. So you have to spoil it a bit by depreciating yourself. And there is this undercurrent of depreciation, self depreciation running through everything that you say.

Voice: Maybe eventually you can't even endure those feelings when you do say something good. You know, you feel really good, you know, you cringe away from it.

S: Yes, you have to undo what you have just done, as it were, or at least to some extent undo it, or nullify it's effect by depreciating the person who has said that particular thing, i.e. yourself.

Voice: It's also an expression of an inability to rejoice in merit.

S: Yes, in this case your own merits. So it is quite a perceptive thing, "Oh, one should speak the word that seareth not himself." Yes? "Nor yet another harms." Harms is a bit weak, as I pointed out, it's vihimseyya which is even stronger, it suggests cruelty.

"Pare ca na vihimseyya." Or you could even translate it as torment, rather like tapaye. One should torment neither oneself or others with one's speech. Cruel speech, this is especially intended here. Some people do speak in a very cruel way. They say very cruel unkind cutting things - so non-violent speech. That's the sort of negative side, and then in the next verse Vangisa comes onto the more positive side. "Should speak [127] the kindly word, words that make others glad, words that bear ill to none, of others kindly speak.

"Piyavacam eva bhaseyya, ya vaca patinandita, yam anadaya papani paresam bhasate piyam." So, "piyavacam eva bhaseyya", that is, one should speak affectionately, lovingly. "Ya vaca patinandita." That speech, hearing which, people rejoice - the speech that makes people glad. What do you think is meant by that? It is just cheering them up and backing them up and flattering them.

Voice: That inspires them.

S: That inspires them, yes.

Voice: It's also real.

Voice: It's good to listen to.

S: But how do you make people joyful by speech?

Voice: By just communicating.

S: It's the energy of the communication. Which arouses joy. It's not so much what you say, it's not that you say something that is pleasing to them in a narrow subjective sense but that there's so much energy in the communication that you cannot but be joyful. This is another very important aspect of communication that we have not mentioned. Communication is transmission of energy, yes? Communication is mutual transmission of energy, so where energy is being transmitted blockages are being removed. And where blockages are being removed there is a sense of exhilaration. And where there is a sense of exhilaration there is joy, there is priti. So where there is real communication there is joy, there cannot but be. But this is quite a different thing from telling people the sort of things that they like to hear on the egoistic level. Where there is real communication there must be joy because there is energy, and there is no real communication without energy. So, "should speak the kindly word, words that make others glad, words that bear ill to none. Of others kindly speak." This is poetic elaboration. He's saying the same thing over in different words, but it is all right, after all this is poetry, [128] not prose. Do you notice any difference between Vangisa's way of putting things and the Buddha's? Vangisa's is much more free, as it were, and flowing. "O, one should speak the word that seareth not himself, nor yet another harms; That is the goodly word; Should speak the kindly word, words that make others glad, words that bear ill to none, of others kindly speak." He seems to have a real poetic gift doesn't he? It sounds much better in Pali than it does in English. Then he says something very important, "'Saccam ve amata vaca', esa dhammo sanantano, sacce atthe ca Dhamme ca', ahu, 'santo patitthita'." This is, in my opinion, one of the most important phrases in the Pali texts. "Saccam ve amata vaca." I've spoken a bit about this on some other occasion. Hare translates it "truth is the deathless word". Chalmers translates it as "truth is nirvana's speech". A bit different isn't it? Saccam: truths. That's all right, they agree about that. Amata, what is amata? Amata means literally immortal, or the immortal. The immortal is a synonym for nirvana. Nowadays we use the word nirvana, or traditionally Buddhism uses the word nirvana for the ultimate goal, the highest reality. Nirvana of course is a noun. In many of the early Pali texts, nirvana is not a noun but a verb. In other words, you get the verbal form of the word used rather than the noun form. The verb form in Pali is nibbuta, which we can't really translate in English except as "to

be nirvanized". Sometimes it's translated as "to become extinct" or "extinguished", which gives you a completely false impression. So it is significant that the Pali texts speak more often of nibbuta than of nibbana, of becoming nirvanized rather than of attaining nirvana, suggesting that the whole thing is a process, something that you do, not a sort of state at which you arrive. In other words it's a more dynamic conception, not a static conception. You nirvanize yourself, you become nirvanized, or you just nirvanize, not attain nirvana, that's a sort of later idiom. You nirvanize. So taking anyway nirvana as a noun, as a state, as an ultimate state or as a word for an ultimate state, there are several other words or terms in Pali. One is amata or amatapatta. Amata means the immortal or the immortal state, the deathless state.

And this also has much the same connotation as the Greek word ambrosial. It's like the sort of food of immortality too. It's got that sort of poetic suggestion. So this is a very common synonym in the early Pali texts for nibbana or nirvana, amata or amatapatta - the immortal, the deathless. So it's a synonym for nirvana. So [129] therefore "saccam ve amata vaca". So Hare and Chalmers translate in two different ways, truth is immortal speech, or the speech of the immortal. You can take it either way. Truth is the speech of the immortal or truth is immortal speech. Do you get any meaning from either of these two alternatives? (pause) All right, take the first one first: "truth is the speech of the immortal." If you take it that way you get Chalmers translation: "truth is the speech of nirvana." What do you mean by that? Why is truth said to be the speech of nirvana, I mean does nirvana speak?

Voice: No.

S: No, who speaks?

Voice: The Enlightened?

S: The Buddha speaks. So when the Buddha speaks, what speaks? The nirvana speaks, the amata speaks, the immortal speaks, the Dharma speaks, or rather that speech of the immortal through the Buddha, as it were, is the Dharma. So truth is reality itself, one may say, speaking through the man who has realized reality. Truth is nirvana speaking through the Buddha, except that you mustn't imagine truth here and Buddha there; the two have become one. So you get the idea? So Vangisa has a very high conception of truth. It's not only poetic; it is deeply philosophical, deeply metaphysical. Truth is the utterance of reality itself. Truth is the utterance of the Buddha who is at one with reality. Truth is the utterance of the enlightened man. Only the enlightened man can speak the truth in the fullest; everybody else speaks lies, everybody else speaks untruths. Truth is what the Buddha says, though not in a dogmatic sense. But who else can speak the truth? Only the one who fully knows the truth, has experienced the truth, can speak the truth. So truth is the utterance of nirvana, truth is the speech of the Buddha.

All right, take the other possible translation. And they are not real alternatives, you have to think of both together. "Truth is immortal speech." What is this immortal speech?

Voice: It sort of suggests that it transcends both time and space.[130]

Voice: It's sort of flavour of the Dharma.

S: But what is immortal speech? Take it a bit more literally.

Voice: Speech that never dies.

S: Speech that never dies, so what sort of speech never dies in ordinary mundane terms? What speech, what literature, really lasts?

Voice: That which has got insight.

Voice: That which is always relevant.

S: But what sort of insight? What sort of relevancy?

Voice: That which is true.

S: But what sort of truth?

Voice: Universal truth.

Voice: Abstract truth.

S: No, it's all too abstract.

Voice: Human's truth.

S: Bit nearer.

Voice: Constantly applicable.

S: Constantly applicable, but can't we sum all this up in one word? I'd say poetic truth. What does really survive in literature? It's the poetry. When I say poetry I don't necessarily mean that which is in metrical form, although very often it is. I mean, what really survived in European literature? Homer survived, Shakespeare survived. Yes? So this is immortal speech, I mean written down. But what makes it immortal?

Voice: There's something about poetry which leaves gaps behind it which you can get a feeling of something immortal.[131]

S: Well you could say poetry is in a way a special form of truth. Do you see what I'm getting at? Poetic truth is akin to spiritual truth. Poetic truth is nearer spiritual truth than, say, the truth of science, which is factual truth. Do you see what I am getting at? So truth is immortal speech. Truth is poetry, not science. Poetry is nearer to truth than science is, poetry especially in the sense of the image. The image tells you something about reality in the way that facts cannot. Facts don't tell you anything about reality but an image tells you something about reality. Even a story will tell you something about reality but not facts.

Voice: It's as if all these arts, for want of a word, it has point (putting it rather crudely), an insight or something, and it also has good means, so that it satisfies your senses and takes you beyond the senses.

S: Yes, poetic truth is a total thing; scientific truth is not. It satisfies, to use that word, the intellect, but does it satisfy the whole being? I mean, the whole being can be satisfied by Shakespeare, leaving aside the highest spiritual insight that you only get in the suttas. The whole being can be satisfied by Homer.

Voice: What do you mean by scientific truth? I mean say you get a picture of an atom built up, in a way that's quite an art form. You can get some kind of feeling.

S: Yes, but it's not recognized as an art form. You are told that that is truth, that is the way things are. And very often the so-called scientific truths aren't truths at all, they are much more poetry, but it's unacknowledged poetry, like the poetry of the dogmatic religions. You are supposed to take it all historically and literally, you are not allowed to think that it is poetry, but it is in fact poetry; it is better understood as such and better appreciated as such. So Vangisa is in fact almost saying poetry is truth, truth is poetry. Or in Keats' words beauty is truth, truth beauty. He is saying something a little bit like that. Do you get the meaning? "Saccam ve amata vaca." I mean people ask "what is truth?" Truth is not something abstract, he is saying, not something general, not something universal: that's scientific truth or even

philosophic truth. Truth, spiritual truth, is poetry, is beauty. [132] He is saying something like that. "Saccam ve amata vaca", "truth is immortal speech". Truth is the immortal speech of poetry, memorable speech. And there is the indeclinable particle "ve" which is not translated by either of the translators. Ve means indeed. It's an emphatic indeclinable particle: truth indeed, or verily. Truth is immortal speech and also the speech of the immortal. So you could even paraphrase it rather wildly, though I think with some justice, and say, "Truth is the poetry spoken by the Buddha which expresses reality, the reality that he has realized." The Buddha is not telling you facts about life; he is speaking poetry, he is communicating images, he is communicating a vision. He's not giving you facts in the ordinary scientific sense.

So truth is the immortal, i.e. poetic speech of the Buddha. And it is that poetic, immortal, memorable speech that communicates reality, even that metaphorical speech, that speech which is larded with images. ... (tape fault) ... "Saccam ve amata vaca, esa dhammo sanantano." So truth is the utterance of nirvana, truth is the utterance of the immortal, or truth is immortal utterance, memorable speech, poetic speech. These two alternative meanings. Probably you have to take both together. So this is a very important, very significant, thing that Vangisa says. And perhaps he is also suggesting that his own poetry, his own versification, of what the Buddha said, itself embodies truth, in as much as it is poetry. It is not that poetry is true but that poetry is truth. So "Saccam ve amata vaca, esa dhammo sanantano": this is the eternal law. That's how it's usually translated.

"'Tis ancient dharma this." Yes, sanantano can mean ancient, but it means more like eternal, everlasting. Dhammo is not dharma in the sense of doctrine and teaching, but in the sense of truth or law or reality. This is an everlasting law, that truth is the utterance of nirvana, or that truth is immortal speech. This is an eternal law or an ultimate principle, something that is always and everywhere true, that always and everywhere holds good. Sometimes Buddhism itself, the Dharma itself, is called the sanatana dhamma, the eternal truth, the eternal law, because it is based upon cosmic and spiritual and transcendental principles, which always hold good, always and everywhere. For instance there is a verse in the Dhammapada which means "Hatred never ceases by hatred. Hatred ceases only by love. This is the eternal law." In other words nowhere, under no [133] circumstances, will hatred ever be brought to an end by means of hatred but only by love. This is a universal principle, "dhammo sanantano". So this same expression is used here - this eternal principle. The truth is the utterance of nirvana or that truth is immortal speech, nirvanic speech, or memorable speech, poetic speech, poetry itself; this is an eternal law, an eternal truth, Vangisa says.

"'Sacce atthe ca Dhamme ca', ahu, 'santo patitthita'." Then, he says, these three things: truth, attha, and dharma, it is in these that calm men are established. One thing that we must always recollect is that in early Buddhism, when the Buddha started teaching that is, terminology was rather loose, not fixed. It became fixed later on. The Buddha just used whatever words were available. So we tend to speak of nirvana and Enlightenment, but there were many other words in use at the Buddha's time, in use by the Buddha himself, he didn't confine himself just to two or three terms. So just as we have seen that amata was used as a synonym of nirvana or nibbana, in the same way "attha". Attha means the goal, in Sanskrit artha. Artha or attha, the goal, was a very common term for the ultimate. For what we now usually call nirvana or Enlightenment (means) simply the goal. So Vangisa goes on to say, having referred to truth and Dharma he says, it is said that in truth, and in the goal, and in the Dharma, the wise are established. Or it is in the truth, it is in the ultimate goal, it is in the Dharma, that the calm, the peaceful, are said to be established. It doesn't quite logically follow from what he has just said, it is more like the continuation of his flow of inspiration. Or as Hare translates (it), "Truth is the deathless word, 'tis ancient Dharma this: they say calm men stand fast in Dharma, goal and truth." Or as Chalmers translates it, "Truth is Nirvana's speech (the adage runs); truth, weal, and Doctrine (so 'tis said) makes saints."

That's not so good, it's not makes saints, it's the calm or the peaceful are established in these three things. And because they are established in these three things: established in truth, established in the goal, established in Dharma, they are said to be calm, peaceful. Because they are established in what is ultimate, so what is there to shake them? How can they be

shaken? "The Wake proclaims the word security, to win the cool and ill to end: That is of words supreme." So Chalmers says, "The Buddha's words of peace, which show the way to win Nirvana and to end all Ill, rank far above all other spoken words." The supreme [134] communication is the Buddha's communication, which is the communication of the immortal, the communication of nirvana, as it were through the Buddha in the form of his poetic speech. It is this which is the supreme word of all, because this shows the way to peace, this shows the way to the end of all suffering. This is what Vangisa is in effect saying.

The word "khemam" is interesting here. It is sort of peaceful, accepting, calm, forgiving even. So the Buddha's speech is like that. "Yam Buddho bhasati vacam khemam nibbanapattiya." The Buddha's peaceful speech, which shows the way to nirvana and to the ending of all suffering, that is the supreme speech. So Vangisa really lets himself go doesn't he, he really is inspired, it really has occurred to him, it really has come to him, and that is why the Buddha says let it come, let it flow forth. There are other sections of the Pali text where Vangisa improvises on other themes of the Buddha. There is quite a little section - you could collect all these together quite easily - there are at least five or six of these occasions when Vangisa improvises, or it occurs to Vangisa and the Buddha says let it occur and Vangisa improvises on beautiful verses, improving in a way on what the Buddha himself has said.

Voice: He seems to see different ramifications, not just to put it into new words.

S: Yes, right. He's not just versifying or rewriting the Buddha's verses, again it's the new approach. He is saying what the Buddha said, but also you can't say that he's adding something of his own - that's too artificial, too external, but it's a complete recreation. He's not just reproducing, not just beautifying the Buddha's words, not just dressing them up in flowery language. He's made what the Buddha has said his own, but owing to his greater poetic facility, his greater poetic gift, his genius in a way, his natural genius apparently, he's able to express it much more fully and adequately and powerfully, on this occasion, than the Buddha himself was able to do - the Buddha apparently not being very gifted as a poet. You see how useful disciples can be.

So the Buddha says, "the goodly word calm men proclaim supreme and second speaking Dharma not otherwise, third speaking kindly not unkindly words and speaking truth, not speaking false is fourth." So it's all there, but what does Vangisa say? "O one should speak the word that seareth not himself, nor yet another harms, that is [135] the goodly word. Should speak the kindly word, words that make others glad, words that bear ill to none, of others kindly speak. Truth is the deathless word, 'tis ancient dharma this: They say calm men stand fast in Dharma, goal, and truth. The Wake proclaims the word security, to win the cool and ill to end: that is of words supreme." So it's much more flowing, much more effective, although Hare's translation of that last verse by the way is not very good.

Do you see the difference? So you can see there is far more to the well-spoken word than meets the eye at first glance. Far more to perfect speech than meets the eye. In a sense only the Buddha is capable of perfect speech in the full sense, though in some ways you could say that Vangisa's speech is more perfect even than the Buddha's. It's the power of communication also that you need to have, which is to some extent a natural power, a natural gift, certainly so far as actual command over words is concerned. That's why when a person has got command over words and a real gift of speech, in that sense, but is communicating untruth, then it is very dangerous indeed.

All right, any general impressions or queries from what we've done this morning? The goodly words, well it's much more than goodly words, real words, real speech, it's much more like that - authentic utterance, authentic speech.

Voice: I thought earlier that (?) versions of what they did in those days, versify it ...

S: Yes.

Voice: Could you give a translation of that last verse again?

S: Literally it's quite simple actually. Literally it is "That peaceful speech of the Buddha which leads to nirvana and to the ending of suffering, that speech is supreme." That's a literal translation. Or which makes an end of suffering, which leads to nirvana and which makes an end of suffering, that speech or that peaceful speech of the Buddha is supreme - patient also, not only peaceful, peaceful and patient speech of the Buddha.

Any general conclusions from this sutta, apart from perfect speech being a much bigger thing than we often think of it as being? [136] I don't know if this is a bit far fetched, but we've had first of all in this chapter so far the going forth, which is obviously crucially important. Then we've had the defeat of Mara and the attainment of Enlightenment. Then we have perfect speech. Do you think this is fortuitous?

Voice: It bears on the importance of speech.

S: Yes, it seems to bear on the importance of speech and the importance of communication. The scriptures themselves, the Dharma, is a communication. So how important therefore truthful communication and real communication, perfect communication? Otherwise no Dharma is communicated. In fact Dharma is that communication.

Voice: I've certainly observed day to day that most damage seems to be done by speech on self and others - on your own state of mind and others.

S: Yes. I think we'll find that in a later sutta where the Buddha says, "each man is born with an axe in his mouth wherewith he cuts down the tree of his merit". (laughter) That's pretty strong isn't it? Each man is born with an axe in his mouth, i.e. brother tongue.

Voice: I've heard you comment before on how easy it is to slip. You may set up a good communication with someone but how easily that slips into just chatter.

S: Well that's not so bad, but the axe is the sharp, unkind, cutting, sarcastic, cynical sort of speech, which some people seem to think is so clever. You see so much of it on radio and TV. Just listen to a discussion programme. It's as though no one wants to take anything seriously, it's all cynicism, or witty cynicism. This is supposed to be so clever and so up to date and so interesting and so entertaining. And it's so really silly and so sick, but they don't know it usually, they seem to have no suspicion of it. And they're paid for it! Instead of being put in prison or something sensible like that, they are paid for it, like performing animals or clowns! (laughter) It's a cheap, pseudo-intellectual theatre.[137]

Voice: Satire.

S: Well satire is sometimes serious, but this sort of witty, superficial, pseudo-intellectual discussion isn't. Occasionally a good point is made but they lose it as soon as possible (laughter) - if that isn't being cynical.

Voice: Scrub out Monty Python.

Voice: That's not cynical.

Voice: I think it is terribly cynical.

Voice: I thought it was just silly.

S: I saw the film of that, whatever it was, some years ago and I was quite shocked. I had no idea of what I was in for, it struck me as completely sick, I was quite sorry I had gone to see it. I had no idea what I was in for. Someone recommended it: "Oh, it's really good." He'd seen it on TV and it was first class and up to date, modern satire, so I thought this must be really

interesting so I went to see it. I was quite horrified, and people were really enjoying it, which was also very horrifying.

Voice: I think it represents an extreme expression of that kind of humour. It is very popular.

S: It's catching on in the States now apparently.

Voice: I've seen it recently and there's a lot of sick humour around transvestism and drag humour, which is very prominent.

S: This is what we noticed yesterday in the study of those two suttas, the relationship between the Buddha and Bimbisara, this total absence of cynicism. It's unthinkable in that sort of context. There's this straight, direct, very human and hearty and sincere and sensitive relating - a very clear, very wholesome atmosphere.

Voice: You don't get the impression of anything like that from any of the Buddhist scriptures actually.[138]

S: Yes. The worst that you ever get is when they become a bit dry or a bit lifeless or a bit repetitive or a bit mechanical or things seem to be over-analysed. At worst you get just that, never anything worse than that, to the best of my recollection.

Voice: Why do you think cynicism has taken quite such a strong role? What do you think is the cause of it?

S: Well, what is cynicism? The Greeks were acquainted with it. The word itself is Greek, although the meaning has changed. It's from the word for dog. Cynicism is doggishness. So the cynics originally were people who flouted accepted standards of behaviour and behaved like dogs, who for instance advocated public copulation, just like dogs, et cetera, or eating your food out of your hands like dogs, or living in kennels like dogs. This is why Diogenes lived in a barrel: he was a cynic. So this was cynicism in a philosophical sense. You may say in a way they had a point, but cynicism came to mean adopting this same sort of derogatory, depreciatory, sneering attitude to everything of value. This is what it means nowadays. You are not impressed, you don't believe in anything, you don't look up to anything, you don't admire anything, you don't respect anything. This is what it means. You are cynical, you have no belief in any positive value. This is what cynicism is. If anybody has or seems to have any positive value or any positive quality you want to undermine it, you want to destroy it. This is cynicism.

Voice: It seems to imply, sort of, basic insecurity, having no roots of your own.

S: But it isn't a sort of open thing, an open attack. It is with a pseudo-pleasant manner and a smile and so on.

Voice: A pseudo-clever technique.

S: But what makes people cynical?

Voice: They are not open.

S: I think it goes deeper than that.[139]

Voice: Insecurity?

Voice: They are so alienated from anything of worth in themselves.

S: But how have they become like that? They just feel bad about themselves, basically, I suppose. This is all that I can imagine. So what has made them feel bad about themselves?

Presumably they've been made to feel bad about themselves early in life. But why.? Who made them? Presumably mother and father did, but why? Why did they make their children feel so inadequate and so bad about themselves?

Voice: Presumably because they in their turn felt bad about themselves.

S: But then how did it all start? I personally tie it up a lot with guilt, and therefore with the dregs and remnants of Christianity in the West.

Voice: Don't you think it is because of lack of a faith, for want of a better word?

S: Yes, through lack of a faith, for want of a better term, a better way of putting it, through lack of a positive faith in something positive. You've lost your faith in Christianity, which did, despite its negative features, give you something positive. But you've got the residue of guilt from Christianity without the more positive side of Christianity which at least helps you to cope with the guilt which Christianity itself creates to some extent(!) The Christianity tells you you are a miserable sinner but you can be saved if you tread the right path. Well, you don't believe in Christianity so you don't believe in the right path any more, but you are left with the feeling that you are a miserable sinner, even though you put it in secular terms, and no path. So you are just left in a state of hopelessness and despair virtually. You are corroded.

Voice: A lot of people just don't resolve it.

S: Well a healthy person would because they are healthy. You would feel something positive in yourself and you would refuse to allow that to be stifled. You would insist on being healthy, being positive, [140] and expressing that.

Voice: One would initially cast off the sin along with the heaven, cast them off together, if one was healthy.

S: Yes. Well cast off hell along with heaven and the fear of hell along with the hope for heaven.

Voice: All life begins with damnation.

Voice: I don't know whether it is a cause or anything but it seems to me that very often an attitude that goes along with cynicism is an intellectual arrogance, or a pseudo-intellectual arrogance - I don't know whether it actually is intellectual - and the feeling of superiority and dismissiveness.

S: Yes. All these things seem to go along with cynicism.

Voice: I think it's like a sort of defence mechanism.

S: Yes, and looking down on simple-minded people who actually believe in positive things and who try to be positive, as though they are complete fools and idiots.

Voice: I was explaining to Bhante the other day actually that I've had a lot of contact with rather intellectually-oriented people in Norwich and I've come up against this, that certain people are feeling a bit threatened because you have more confidence and certain outward-going qualities which they lack. So they throw it up as a sort of defence against you. So you feel quite dismissed and sneered at. I really find that frustrating, as if you are thick, you are not intellectual, and I accept that...

S: Yes right, you can't be healthy unless you are stupid. (laughter) So if you are healthy you must be stupid. Well, there is this image of the healthy and well developed but rather stupid person - a bit thick in the head, all solid bone above the eyebrows, (laughter) which isn't true at all.

[Break between sessions]

[141]

4. The Bharadvaja or Sundarikabharadvaja Sutta

"Thus have I heard: Once the Master dwelt among the Kosalese on the banks of the river Sundarika. And then, too, there brahman Bharadvaja of Sundarika fed the sacrificial fire and worshipped the fire-oblation. And when he had finished, he rose from his seat and looked round the four quarters, thinking, "Who, pray, should eat the remains of the sacrifice?"

"And the brahman saw the Master hard by, seated at the foot of a tree, with his head covered. Thereat, with the remains of the sacrifice in his left hand and the water-pot in his right, he approached him. And at the sound of the brahman's footsteps the Master uncovered his head.

"Why," thought the brahman, "this man's shaven, a mere shaveling!" and he thought to return thence, but considering further, that even some brahmans are shaven here, he approached the Master thinking, "I were good if I go and ask his birth," and said: "What is your birth, sir?" And the Master replied to the brahman in these verses:

(455) The Master: "No brahman I nor yet a rajah's son,
No peddling trader nor of any breed:
I know the lineage of average folk,
And, man-of-naught, fare in the world a sage.

(456) Robed in the wanderer's garb, I homeless fare
With shaven head, exceeding cool-of-self,
Untroubled here by youths attending me:
Unmeet thou askest of my lineage."

S: Let's go through this then. "Thus have I heard: Once dwelt the Master among the (people of Kosala) on the banks of the river Sundarika. And then, too, there brahman Bharadvaja of Sundarika fed the sacrificial fire and worshipped the fire-oblation." This is of course a reference to the pre-Buddhistic vedic fire cult. The brahmans of those days kept this up very strongly. Some of them still do even today. Essentially it is a making of offerings to various gods and even goddesses in the sacred fire. The offerings are sort of burnt offerings. This is a very primitive belief, that anything offered in the fire to the gods will reach them, that it will be transformed into smoke and the smoke ascend to heaven and the gods receive the offering in the form of smoke or in the form of perfume. In the Old Testament we get Jehovah smelling the smell of the sacrifice, smelling the smell of the [142] holocausts that are made to him. [See for example Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which deal with little else, tr.] So for this reason the fire becomes regarded as a sort of intermediary between heaven and earth, and the fire god comes to be regarded as an intermediary.

So in the Buddha's day still this brahminical cult of making offerings to the gods in the sacred fire was very, very widespread and popular among the brahmans, and it had become very elaborate indeed. Here we are given just a brief reference to it, and one often finds these references in the Pali texts. It is not always clear what is happening and why but we can get just a general idea of what it is all about. So apparently at the same time that the Buddha was living in Kosala on the banks of that river there was a brahmin living there too, and he was performing a sacrifice and making offerings in the fire. He might have been doing it on his own account or he might have been paid by somebody to perform that sacrifice on their behalf. So he would be doing it for money, as it were. The brahmans among other things were a professional priest class or caste, and they performed these ceremonies, made these offerings to the gods for various purposes on behalf of other people, either for the sake of increasing their riches or for the sake of sons or for the sake of power. It was believed that you could gain all these things by hiring a brahmin to perform these ceremonies for you and by paying him lavishly for doing that. So here this brahmin too was engaged in this way, although as I say we are not told whether on his own behalf or on behalf of somebody else. So

he made the offerings into the fire. Sometimes the offerings were of clarified butter and sometimes they were of other things, even of animals. "And when he had finished he rose from his seat and looked round the four quarters thinking, "Who, pray, should eat the remains of the sacrifice?" This is a reference to a custom that we don't fully understand but there are several references to it. Apparently at the end of the ceremony, at the end of the fire offering, whoever was officiating - and he might have a number of assistants and quite a lot of helpers, only the brahmin is referred to here but there must have been a lot of other people; it might have been, must have been, a very big occasion, a very great celebration; whoever is leading the sacrifice looks around for some suitable worthy person to whom to offer whatever is left over unsacrificed, which has not been used up in the sacrifice - either ghee or food or animals or whatever. And the suggestion seems to be that if you can find a really worthy person, preferably a very eminent brahmin or a sage, to whom to offer whatever is [143] left over from the sacrifice, then it will bring good luck on the sacrifice and make it even more effective. That's seems to have been the idea, as far as we can make out. So when this brahmin had finished he rose from his seat on which he had been sitting performing the ceremony, making the offerings into the fire, and he looked all around thinking, "To whom shall I offer the remains of the sacrifice so that he can eat them and good luck upon the whole enterprise. "And the brahman saw the Master hard by seated at the foot of a tree with his head covered." Why do you think the Buddha had covered his head?

Voice: Maybe it was hot.

S: Maybe it was hot, yes. Or maybe he just wanted to be unobserved or alone with his own thoughts and he would just cover it with the edge of his robe.

Voice: In the practice of meditation I've seen some people cover their heads.

S: Some do, it's not very common, just to keep out disturbance or even mosquitoes. "Thereat, with the remains of the sacrifice in his left hand," which is the inauspicious hand incidentally. He might have been carrying it actually in his hand or he might have had a ladle, a ceremonial ladle was used to ladle ghee into the sacred fire. He might have had the ladle in his left hand with some ghee left over in the ladle, "and the water-pot in his right," the water pot which was used for ceremonial sprinklings and ablutions. These things are still used in India, "he approached him," that is, approached the Master, "and at the sound of the brahman's footsteps the Master uncovered his head," to see who is coming, what is happening. ""Why" thought the brahman, "this man's shaven, a mere shaveling." Let's look into that, what's the word in the original? "Mundo ayam bhavam! Mundako ayam bhavan". A "mundako" is a rather contemptuous expression meaning a shaven-headed person, a shaveling. Something like our English "bald-pate". In the Old Testament some boys teased the prophet Elijah, calling out to him "thou bald-pate," and he calls down bears from the mountains to eat up the boys. (laughter) This is in the Old Testament, bald-pate, baldy, something like that. [2 Kings 2:23-4, tr.] So one gets here the first suggestion of antagonism between the sramanas [144a] and the brahmanas. The brahmanas are what we call the brahmins, that's the anglicized form of the word, the brahmins are the priestly caste of Hinduism. And of course they were very, very influential in the Buddha's day and have remained influential ever since. They generally regard themselves as having the monopoly of religious knowledge and culture generally. But who are the sramanas?

Voice: The non-brahmin sadhus.

S: The non-brahmin sadhus. Brahmins generally, brahmins as such, one might say, did not become sadhus, they did not become wanderers. They tend to be very much based on, and oriented to, the home and the family. They kept up their religious practices at home, they made offerings in the sacred fire at home, they had wives and families and fields and farms and herds of cows, they had gold and silver and corn. They are described very much in these terms in the Pali texts. So the brahmin in a way stands for ethnic religion, and they followed of course the Vedic tradition, including the Vedic tradition of fire sacrifice and animal sacrifice, or making offerings in the sacred fire, offering up animals in the sacred fire. But the

sramanas were those who had broken away from the brahmanical vedic tradition. They tended to be anti-brahmin they didn't accept the brahmin's claims to be foremost in society and to have a monopoly of religion and culture. They didn't accept that claim of the brahmins and they didn't accept the authority of the Vedic tradition. You've heard of the four Vedas, I take it. The four Vedas make up the oldest scriptures of the Hindus. There's the Rig Veda, the Yajur, the Sama, and the Atharva. These four Vedas consist entirely of hymns of praise, or almost entirely of hymns of praise, to various gods and goddesses and so on, mainly gods. Gods like Indra and Agni.

Voice: Does any one of the Vedas come up to the level of a kind of universal god?

S: Some of them do. There are some hymns, especially later hymns, which become somewhat monotheistic, or even in some cases quite philosophical, especially very late ones, which possibly overlap the Buddhist period. In the Buddha's day only three Vedas [144b] were known, three Vedas are referred to. The Atharva Veda seems to have been compiled later. But the brahmins accepted the authority of this Vedic literature, they regarded it as divinely inspired, as originating from God. They made use of the Vedic texts in their ceremonies and sacrifices. But the sramanas, who can be described as the freelance spiritual people, who were usually wanderers, they did not accept the authority of the Vedas nor the superiority of the brahmins. So there was this very strong cleavage in the religious and spiritual life of India in the time of the Buddha. So the sramanas did not usually accept, as I have said, either the authority of the vedas or the superiority of the brahmins. And there was quite a bit of conflict and antagonism between the two groups and the two traditions.

So the Buddha, naturally, belonged to the sramana as distinct from the brahmana tradition, the Buddha too did not accept the authority of the Vedas nor did he accept the superiority of the brahmin, as we shall see in this particular sutta. The Buddha was not only a sramana, he is often referred to as the great sramana, maha-sramana, because he was so well known and distinguished. Not an ordinary sramana but the great sramana, the most important representative of that sramanic, anti-brahminic tradition. Sramana literally means one who is washed, one who is clean, one who is pure. The brahmins who lived at home usually wore their hair long, the sramanas, on the other hand, who wandered about and who had gone forth, for the most part they usually cut their hair or even shaved their heads. So if you saw somebody wandering around with a yellow robe and a shaven head you could be pretty certain that he was not a brahmin, that he was a sramana. But not always, because there were some who were brahmins by birth who became dissatisfied with the brahminical tradition and who became sramanas by conviction. So you had a few people who were brahmins by birth and sramanas by conviction and who in the eyes of the brahmins, of course, remained brahmins. Like Sariputta and Moggallana, they were of brahmin origin but they became sramanas, they went forth, they wandered, and eventually they became disciples of the Buddha. So there is a bit of overlap, as it were, in this way. So when the brahmin here, when Bharadvaja, sees the Buddha's shaven head he thinks, "Oh this man is shaven, a mere shaveling, a bald-pate." I mean this was the very derogatory term which the brahmins used to describe the sramanas to express their own antagonism towards them. They [145] called them the mundakas, in a very contemptuous way, shaven-headed people. "And he thought to return thence." So he thought, well, no use offering to him because the brahmins had no respect for the sramanas, they did not regard them as very worthwhile people, they rather looked down upon them. So thinking that this was a sramana he didn't feel like offering the remains of the sacrifice to him; it wouldn't bring good luck on the sacrifice. He couldn't be a wise man, he couldn't be a sage, he was a mere shaveling. But considering further, that even some brahmins had shaven hair either because some local brahmins have the custom of just shaving their heads, or thinking that, well, even though he was a sramana he might be an ex-brahmin, as it were, and there might still be some good left in him, "he approached the Master thinking, "T'were good if I go and ask his birth"", that is, his caste, his jati. Let me find out, maybe he is a brahmin after all, and if he is a brahmin well maybe I can make the offering to him, maybe I can offer the remnants of the sacrifice to him. So regardless of whether he's shaven headed or not let me just ask if he is a brahman. "and said, "What is your birth sir?" and the Master replied to the brahman in these verses." This is still the question that one is asked all over

India, especially in the villages. You must have noticed, those of you who have read my Thousand-Petalled Lotus, all the time one is asked what is your caste. Why do you think this is? Why do people want to know your caste?

Voice: It tells them exactly how they can behave towards you.

S: Right, yes, if you are higher caste than you or lower, whether they can take food from your hand, or water from your hand, or eat with you, or marry into your family or you into theirs, et cetera. So until you know a person's caste you feel completely at a loss with them. In India it is virtually impossible to relate to anybody as a human being, just as an individual. You relate to them as the member of a certain caste. This is very, very strong, even now, very strong indeed. So do you think there might be any equivalent in our society, even though in a much weaker form?

Voice: Yes, people feel much happier if they can label you.[146]

S: In what sort of way?

Voice: Well, what work you do.

S: What work you do, yes.

Voice: Class matters.

Voice: Your accent.

S: Yes, class, your accent, where you went to school, but especially perhaps what sort of work you do, because people realize that there is such a thing as social mobility, and that the old aristocracy has lost a lot of the respect that it used to enjoy. So it is your work that becomes important, whether you are in TV or whether you work behind the counter in a shop or whether you drive a van. People want to know what do you do, and then they very often, consciously or unconsciously, treat you accordingly.

Voice: That's the first question you get asked hitchhiking. In fact I've had it as the first thing someone has said when I've got into the car.

S: It's not quite so bad as "what is your caste?" but it does represent an attempt not just to label you but to classify you, so that people know how to behave towards you, which means they are not really relating to you directly at all. Of course sometimes they just ask that just to get conversation going and may not take it very seriously, but some people, a lot of people even, do take it quite seriously. And in India I have found, as I have related, that if people couldn't find out your caste they became very disturbed, very upset, even angry, if you refused to tell them the secret of your caste, what you really were. So in much the same way here perhaps some people might become quite upset, quite disturbed, if they couldn't find out what you did for a living. How you were employed, what your profession was, if they couldn't classify you, couldn't label you. Anybody else experience anything of this sort?

Voice: I had something happen to me when I was travelling [147] last year. I was in a station and got talking to a couple of men, one Pakistani and one Indian man, and it was late and we were tired and it was quite informal. And I went to touch the Indian, friendly on the arm and he shrunk away. Would this be something to do with caste? I mean he was doing this to all the white people, all the Europeans - he couldn't shake hands, he wouldn't touch them. Would that be something to do with caste?

S: It might have been. It's a bit unusual in someone coming to the West.

Voice: Because you referred to, in higher caste systems Europeans are classed as untouchables.

S: But I mean people coming to the West don't usually have those sort of ideas. They accept that they have got to come into contact with people. So what does the Buddha say in reply?

"No brahman I nor yet a rajah's son,
No peddling trader nor of any breed:
I know the lineage of average folk,
And, man-of-naught, fare in the world a sage."

So this is quite cryptic in a way. I think I am going to have to refer to the original. "Na brahmano no 'mhi, na rajaputto, na vessayano, uda koci no 'mhi. Gottam parinnaya puthujjananam akincano manta carami loke." He says, I am not a brahmin. This is what the brahmin Bharadvaja is trying to get at, whether he is a brahmin or not. But he also says I am not a rajah's son. I am not a kshatriya, I am not of the kshatriya class. Isn't this strange in a way? Because he is a raja's son, he is a kshatriya, he does belong to that caste, he is of that birth? So why do think he said that? Is he telling a lie?

Voice: He's just disowning his class, dissociating from the whole system.

S: Yes, dissociating from the whole system, also it is the Buddha speaking.

Voice: He's transcended the caste.

S: Yes, the Buddha is casteless. And he's not a trader.[148] You know there are these four main castes: the brahmin, the kshatriya, the vaishya, and sudra - the priest, the warrior and ruler, the trader and merchant, and the toiler. So the fourth isn't mentioned. But he says "I am not a brahman, I am not the son of a raja, I am not a kshatriya, I am not of the warrior caste, neither am I a trader or merchant, nor anything of that kind." "Gottam parinnaya puthujjananam." Puthujjana is usually translated as many folk, ordinary people, Hare translates it average folk. "I know the lineage of average folk." What do you think that means? The word for lineage is gotta, gotta means sort of clan, although it has got another meaning also in later Buddhist literature. So what do you think the Buddha means by saying I know the gotta, I know the lineage, I know the clan of ordinary people? Ordinary people suggests those who haven't got any degree of Enlightenment, the anaryas. You are familiar with this distinction between the arya and the anarya? Who or what are the aryan in the Buddhistic sense?

Voice: Stream entrants and upwards.

S: Yes, all those who belong to the aryan sangha, the real, the transcendental, spiritual community, as you say, upwards from the stream entrant. All those who have not entered the stream, all those who will continue to go round and round on the wheel of life indefinitely. These are called anaryas, they are also called puthujjanas, average folk or many folk. So the Buddha is saying, "I know the lineage of these non-aryans, I know the lineage of these puthujjanas, average people." Do you think he is just referring to caste lineage or possibly to something else?

Voice: Karma.

S: Yes, he's referring to their karma. I know what sort of karmas they perform and therefore I can predict what sort of destiny they will have. He is referring to their lineage in this sort of way. There is the lineage of their deeds which is much more important than the lineage of birth. So he knows that: "akincano manta carami loke." Akincano, this is a very important word. It is translated by Hare "man-of-naught", [149] one who has nothing, one who is nothing. What do you think that means?

Voice: Someone who has no caste, no ideas, absolutely nothing, completely.

S: Yes. One could say, paraphrasing it, who has no ego, who cannot be identified as this or

that, who cannot be labelled because he isn't identifiable with anything conditioned. So that the man of nought is the Buddha, is the Enlightened one, who is not to be categorized or labelled in any way in terms of the conditioned. This ties up with the Buddha's reply to the brahmin Upaka, [sic. For Upaka read Dona (Anguttara Nikaya 4.36), tr.] when Upaka asked him: are you a deva? No, not a deva. Are you a gandhara? No, not a gandhara. Are you a yakkha? No, not a yakkha. Are you a human being? No, not a human being. Then what are you? I am a Buddha. All those conditionings on account of which I might have been described, he says, as a deva, as a gandhara, as a yakkha, as a human being, all those conditionings have been destroyed, therefore I am a Buddha. I am something or someone unclassifiable, something unique, someone unique, a pure individual not to be relegated to any class or any category, not to be labelled in any way. And this is virtually what he is saying here. I know the lineages of other people, not only their caste lineages, but their karma lineages, but I am free from all that, I have no caste and I have no karma. I have no destiny in the world, I don't belong to the world, I am a man of nought. I can't be categorized in any way, can't be classified, I am just the Buddha, I am just the Enlightened one, I am just a pure unique individual. This is in effect what he is saying.

So "akincano manta carami loke." Manta means something like someone who recites mantras. He is suggesting that he is the true brahmin, as it were. I'll look up the word manta, it is the same as the Sanskrit word mantra and it comes from a root meaning to call or to invoke. And this of course is what one does in the course of the brahminical ceremonies and offerings, one invokes the gods to whom the offerings and sacrifices are made. So the Buddha is suggesting that he is the true sacrificer, he is the true brahmin, the true caller upon the gods. So he says therefore, according to Hare's translation, "and man-of-naught, fare in the world a sage." Or Chalmers translates it rather differently. "No brahmin I, no prince, no [150] farmer, or aught else. All worldly ranks I know, but, knowing, go my ways as - simply nobody." So he doesn't say anything about faring in the world a sage, he misses that bit out, but the full version would be: and man-of-naught fare in the world or walk in the world, as the true brahmin. He is suggesting, by using this word manta, that the brahmin himself is not the true brahmin. He is suggesting that the sramana is the true brahmin, in this way very often the sramanas try to turn the tables on the brahmins by saying that the real brahmin is something different from you. The real brahmin doesn't live, doesn't behave, as you behave. So they try to turn the tables, as it were, on the brahmins in this way. But in later Indian history that rather misfired, the brahmins came back in full force. It probably would have been better to get rid of even the word brahmin altogether. So you see what the Buddha is saying and how he is led to say it as a result of this particular incident, this particular episode. The Buddha is insisting on being an unclassifiable, enlightened human being, and he repudiates any attempt to label him. He says that he is a man-of-naught. So this term akincano, the man-of-naught, the man who is nothing and has nothing, the man who, in a sense has no self, no ego. It is a very common term, or a not uncommon term at least, in the more archaic Pali texts like the Sutta Nipata. But it's hardly used in modern expositions of Buddhism at all. Perhaps it wouldn't be too much of an exaggeration to say that it isn't used at all.

So what do you think this sort of expression suggests in contemporary terms, or in terms of self development in general nowadays? Does it represent an attractive ideal to become a man-of-naught? Akincano. Is it a very meaningful way of trying to put across what the enlightened man is like? Instead of saying he is the enlightened man or the blessed one or the Buddha, say he is the man-of-naught. Does it sound very meaningful?

Voice: No.

S: It doesn't?

Voice: I would say personally that I find it quite good but to the majority of people it might not.

Voice: In a way, it is like being a man-of-naught he is [151] not limited by any one thing.

S: Yes, yes.

Voice: It implies great freedom, a sort of boundlessness to evolve.

S: Yes it's unlimited.

Voice: Do you mean do we think it would be generally attractive because personally I find it very attractive?

S: It means in a way an unspecialized human being - a man-of-naught. Somebody not anything in particular, you can't say he's this, you can't say he's that. (laughter)

Voice: It would be more attractive if it was put in the way of you are what you are, rather than ...

S: Yes, but it must be an unconditioned what you are, not a conditioned. Because usually if you say, I am what I am, it's I am my own conditioned self, not my unconditioned self. I am what I am, bad temper and all, sort of thing, yes? But that isn't quite what the Buddha meant is it?

Voice: I think that today, though, when so much store is set by having so many possessions and what have you ... it really does run directly against the grain.

S: It's the spiritual pauper.

Voice: It suggests sort of giving up things.

S: Yes, having nothing.

Voice: Yes, a totally ascetic way of life.

S: Or what would seem to the outsider to be an ascetic way of life.

Voice: Not having to do anything.[152]

S: It doesn't actually say that, but it is certainly no duties in the sense of duties that follow or derive from your conditioned status. If you're not a brahmin, obviously you have no duties as a brahmin. If you're not a kshatriya, you don't have the duty of fighting. If you're not a father you don't have the duty of looking after children. If you are not a driver you don't have the responsibility of looking after your vehicle.

Voice: Now it sounds like tremendous freedom.

S: So the man-of-naught is the free man. He's free to move in any direction, free to express himself in any way. He's the unconditioned man, the empty man, the void man in terms of later Buddhist thought, a man of sunyata, naught in the sense of sunyata. In very late semi-Buddhist Tantric traditions in eastern India there is a term, the sunyapurusa, which means the empty man or the man of emptiness, the sunyapurusa. It's not a strictly Buddhist expression but owes something to Buddhist influence. It's a bit like that in a way, the empty man, the man who is emptiness, or the man of emptiness, the man who's the embodiment of the void. Well the Bodhisattva is very much like that, the Bodhisattva is the embodiment of voidness, the Bodhisattva has voidness for his being. He has no being for his being. So he is free to move in any direction. If you identify yourself with a specific function or role people expect you always to act in accordance with that and not to move out of it. You see what I mean?

Voice: It's like saying you are a Buddhist.

S: Yes, even that. One of the Friends down at Aryatara who is quite young and still going to college told me he went off to college the previous week with a flask of coffee, and one of his college friends said, "Oh, taking stimulants? I thought Buddhists weren't allowed to do that." So this is the sort of thing that happens, people have got their own very conditioned idea of what to be a Buddhist means and expect you to live up to their conditioned ideas of what a Buddhist is or what a Buddhist does. So as soon as you label yourself there are, in a way, certain expectations. If you remain unlabelled then no one can formulate expectations. If you say that you are a driver, they expect you to be able to drive, yes?[153]

Voice: When someone asks you what you do, you can say, "Well at the moment ..."

S: Right, yes, which is perfectly truthful. But when they say "What do you do?" they mean what do you permanently, regularly, habitually do, and what do you make your living by doing, what are you?

Voice: "I sit in cars and answer silly questions." (laughing)

S: But do you think you can carry this through indefinitely? Do you think you can always say, "Well, I'm not anything, I'm a man-of-naught"?

Voice: Well you can't tell the inland revenue, the tax man, something like that, or the dole man.

S: Yes, especially the dole man. He wants to know what you are, whether you are a carpenter or an accountant or so on. What do most of us do. Any of you have that particular difficulty?

Voice: What, with the dole?

S: Yes, the saying what you are. What do you do about it?

Devamitra: Well I've been classified three different times. First of all as an actor, then as a yoga teacher. My latest classification is Buddhist teacher. They were going to put me on the professional and executive register when I stated qualifications so presumably a Buddhist teacher is a professional.

S: You see, that is a categorization to begin with, that you are a professional. You come in that sort of bracket.

Devamitra: Because I am not available for full time permanent employment I have to be available for temporary work, of which there's none available anyway, so there's no real difficulty.

S: Anybody else got any experience of this?

Voice: I let them tell me. In Swaffham I was in a bit of a daze and I didn't know what I wanted to be, so she asked me what [154] I like doing so I said I quite like gardening. So she put me down as a gardener, a gardener - handyman, which is quite nice.

Voice: I'm a painter and decorator.

Voice: They'd never do that in London, they'd kick you out.

Voice: She looked me up a category, they have a book of categories and you must be one.

S: Oh, just like the caste system.

Voice: Yes, only there's a bit more of a choice.

S: What are you down as?

Voice: As a gardener.

S: Oh, as a gardener, gardening seems rather popular.

Voice: I'm a gardener too. They checked up that I actually had done some.

S: Had you?

Voice: Luckily I had, just a couple of weeks but it was sufficient to get me classified as that. (laughter)

S: So by virtue of two weeks gardening you are permanently classified as a gardener.

Voice: The fact that you are a nuclear physicist is neither here nor there. (laughing)

Voice: But you're not even classified in those terms. You are a gardener, yes, but a gardener is that number, so that's the number they put down on your card, so that your actual classification is numerical.

S: That's the number that's fed into the computer, presumably. Anyway what does the Buddha go on to say? Having said [155] "No brahman I, nor yet a rajah's son, no peddling trader nor of any breed: I know the lineage of average folk, and man-of-naught fare in the world a sage." Having said that he goes on to say, "Robed in the wanderer's garb, I homeless fare with shaven head, exceeding cool-of-self, untroubled here by youths attending me: unmeet thou askest of my lineage."

So "robed in wanderer's garb". What is that? "Samghativasi agiho carami." Samghati is one of the three robes worn by the bhikkhu. It's the big sort of blanket robe that goes around the shoulders, which can be used as a sort of quilt at night. It's usually double and made of lots of little patches and quite thick and can be quite warm. So samghativasi, the wearer of a bhikkhu's robe. It's not really a wanderer's robe though maybe wanderers wore it before bhikkhus did. "Agiho": without a house, homeless I wander. "Nivuttakeso": free from hair, shaven headed. Why do you think this practice of shaving the head grew up among the wanderers, and in other parts of the world?

Voice: Cutting off attachment. It is symbolic thereof. And one is detached to how one looks if one can just shave one's head. Also hygiene I should think.

S: Hygiene, yes. I think it's mainly on account of lice, especially if you are wandering from place to place and you can't always get a bath. It's much simpler just to cut it all off, especially in a hot climate. Whether you look better with it on or better with it off that seems to be a matter of personal choice or taste. Some people think you look better with it, others think you look better without it. Difficult to know who is right.

Chintamani: Quite often in pictures of the Buddha one sees him with it tied up on top. I get a little bit confused as to actually what the Buddha's head was like. There's lots of short curls or...

S: We also mustn't think of the bhikkhus in the Buddha's day as shaving every day. The general practice was and still is in India among ordinary people to shave twice a month. So at certain times, just before his fortnightly shave, the Buddha would have had hair about so long. And then after this fortnightly shave he would have been bald again and also would have had a little beard. Bhikkhus in the East nowadays usually shave every day, but that is not strictly according to the rule, [156] and you are strictly speaking supposed to shave head and face at the same time and in the same way. Some bhikkhus still follow this quite strictly so they're either very unshaven with a stubble or the limit is supposed to be two fingers breadth

of hair according to the strict rule. So some have got the short beard and short hair, or no hair and no beard at all, depending on the time of the month. But apparently it was the custom for the sramanas to shave and the brahmins not to shave the head, so they were roughly distinguishable.

So therefore the Buddha says, "Robed in the wanderer's garb, I homeless fare with shaven head, exceeding cool-of-self," - abhinibbutatto. Abhi is exceeding, nibbuta is connected with nirvana, nibbana. It's not cool-of-self, that is another word, sitabhava. Nibbuta means something like blown-out. It suggests with all conditioned mental activities completely exhausted. It has a sort of negative denotation but the connotation is very positive. The word or the verb nibbuto, from which nirvana or nibbana the noun derives, refers to the blowing out, or the becoming extinguished, of a flame. A flame goes out when there's no more fuel to sustain it; in the same way the flame of conditioned existence goes out when there is no more craving and hatred and delusion to sustain it. But unfortunately there's a slightly nihilistic suggestion because when the flame goes out, well, as it were, nothing is left. But this is not what is meant. It means that the conditioned entirely disappears, only the unconditioned, as it were, is left. So here the Buddha says, "I homeless fare with shaven head." Having attained to the complete extinction of the conditioned self, one could say that. Having attained to the cessation of conditioned personal existence: "alippamano idha manavehi". Manava is a youth, a young man. The brahmin probably had a crowd of young men attending upon him, helping with the sacrifice, bringing in the animals, heaping up the firewood. It might have been a very big, noisy, bustling sort of affair. So the Buddha says, "untroubled here by youths attending me": I'm not troubled by all this fuss and bother and bustle. "Unmeet thou askest of my lineage": it is not suitable to ask me what is my clan, what is my lineage. So what do you think in fact the Buddha is doing in these two verses? What is he in fact saying?

Voice: The question does not appertain to me.

S: Well not only that, he's questioning - in a way he is repudiating [157] - the brahmin's whole outlook, whole attitude, his whole philosophy, his whole religion, his whole way of life. He's completely repudiating it, rejecting it. Do you see that? It's the universal rejecting the ethnic, as it were.

Voice: He's quite strong about this thing.

S: Yes. So "No brahman I, nor yet a rajah's son,
No peddling trader nor of any breed.
I know the lineage of average folk,
And, man-of-naught, fare in the world a sage.
Robed in the wanderer's garb, I homeless fare
With shaven head, exceeding cool-of-self,
Untroubled here by youths attending me:
Unmeet thou askest of my lineage."

So he is rejecting the whole conditioned attitude, the whole conditioned approach of that brahmin. He is rejecting first of all the caste system, he's rejecting all attempts to categorize individuals, certainly Enlightened individuals. He is rejecting by implication the whole sacrificial system with its subsequent search for a good brahmin to whom to offer the remnants of the sacrifice. So he's really more than questioning, rejecting everything that that particular brahmin stands for. And he's suggesting he has a much deeper knowledge of people's lineages in a different sort of way, he understands their karma. And he himself is free from karma, being Enlightened.

So this must have been quite a shock for the brahmin, and no doubt he had been celebrating that sacrifice for days on end. Sometimes the sacrifices went on for weeks. It was a very big occasion in the locality. All sorts of people were there, he was surrounded by a crowd of young brahmins helping him and it had all been going very well. And perhaps he was feeling very satisfied, very happy that this rather strenuous performance was at last over. He'd

brought it to a successful conclusion and there was just one thing left remaining to be done, just to find a suitable person to offer the remnants of the sacrifice. So he saw sitting under a tree in the distance someone who looked as though he might be a brahmin, what with his head covered, and so he approaches him to offer him the remnants of the sacrifice. The man uncovers his head and, what? It's a wretched shaveling, a mendicant, a sramana. Anyway he thinks well maybe not, maybe it is a brahmin after all, because sometimes even brahmins shave their heads, so he says, "What's your birth, are you a brahman?" And then he gets this tremendous repudiation of everything that he stands for. Not only is he not a brahmin, he doesn't believe in anything that that brahmin believes [158] in at all. He completely rejects his whole philosophy, his whole way of life, his sacrificial system, his gods, his outlook, his whole world. In two quite vigorous verses he sweeps away the whole lot. So the brahmin is left with nothing. So what does this poor brahmin say then?

(457) "But brahmans, sir, of brahmans always ask:
Art brahman, friend?"

S: Yes, this is what he says, his sort of trembling excuse. In other words "This is what we always do." There's this sort of rather pitiful excuse, this is what people always fall back on when they are questioned or challenged. "Well we always do it this way, it's the custom, it's the way things usually are." They can give no better excuse than that. So what does the Buddha say in reply to that?

Voice: "If as thou say'st, thou art,
And call'st me none, chant me the Savitri
With phrases three and twice twelve syllables!"

S: Yes, so what does this show? If, the Buddha says, if you are as you say a brahman and you say that I am not a brahman, then chant for me the Savitri with three phrases and twenty four syllables. What is this Savitri?

Voice: A hymn.

S: Yes, you're getting pretty close. It's a couple of lines from the Vedas which the brahman is supposed to chant every morning when he performs his morning ablutions. It's more usually called the gayatri mantra, and it goes something like this. "I worship the glorious disc of the sun, may the disc of the sun stimulate my thoughts." It's a prayer like that. In modern times it's a purely mechanical performance by many brahmins and most of them of course don't do it any more. But when the brahmin is initiated as a brahmin, when he receives his sacred thread, he is taught the Gayatri mantra, usually by his father, and he has to thereafter recite it daily at least morning and evening and preferably three times a day when performing his ceremonial ablutions. So usually they try to keep these things away from the non-brahmins. Non-brahmins are not supposed to recite these sorts of verses. Certainly the untouchables are not supposed ever to recite them.[159]

So the Buddha shows that he is acquainted with these things. Sometimes kshatriyas also learned these things. He might have learned them when he was at home. He might have been even initiated into the Gayatri mantra and given a sacred thread. Sometimes kshatriyas were, even vaishyas, though more and more in the course of Indian history the brahmins tried to limit this just to themselves and in the end they did, virtually.

So the Buddha says, if you are a brahman as you say you are then just let me hear you recite the Savitri, the Gayatri mantra, then I shall know you are a real brahman. So what is the brahmans response to this?

(458) Trusting in what did rishis, Manu's breed,
Nobles and brahmans offer sacrifice
Unto the devas often in the world?

S: So the brahman realizes that his whole system, his whole way of life, his whole religion is being challenged. So he's trying to sort of argue, not even argue very vigorously or even strongly. He's saying, "if what you say is true, then why did the sages of old, the descendants of Manu, why did the ancient brahmins, the nobles and brahmins, offer sacrifices to the devas? Why did they do that? What was the source of their faith, if as you say it is all meaningless and valueless?" So "Trusting in what did rishis", sages, "Manu's breed nobles and brahmans offer sacrifice unto the devas often in the world?"

Rishi? A rishi is a sort of seer and the hymns of the Vedas, the verses, the mantras of the Vedas, were supposed to have been seen in their meditations by these rishis and then revealed. That is the old tradition and the sum total of these mantras; the sum total of these revealed verses seen by the rishis make up the Vedas. And these verses are employed for sacrificial purposes. So the brahmin is asking or saying as it were: well, it can't be altogether meaningless, there must have been something in it, I mean on account of what belief, on account of what faith, did our forefathers, the ancient rishis, do all these things? Why did they perform all these sacrifices that have been handed down to us? With what faith, on what account, for what reason? You seem to know about these things, you please explain to me. This is in fact what he is saying, or in effect is what he is saying. Then the Buddha says something contradictory to what comes later on. So what is that?[160]

Voice: "When an adept in lore and end receives
The offering at the time of sacrifice,
That sacrifice doth prosper then, I say."

S: So the Buddha seems to agree with this ancient tradition, that if someone who really knows all about sacrifices receives the offering at the time of sacrifice, then the sacrifice prospers. But as we will see later on there's a sort of double meaning in it. Later on he rejects the offering, the remnant of the sacrifice. He says it isn't proper for him to receive that. But here he seems to say that it is all right for him to receive it. So what do you think that means?

Voice: Perhaps he's talking about the gods who receive the...

S: No, not that. He's just giving an entirely different meaning of his own to the entire thing. I mean, one could say he describes himself as an adept in lore and sacrifice. What is that in the original? "Vedagu" - one who knows the Vedas - "yannakale". The Buddha says in a way that, yes, he knows all about sacrifices, he understands sacrifices, but he attaches his own meaning to that. In other parts of the Pali texts he gives a sort of allegorical explanation of the sacrifices. Like "the fuel is faith", and that "the fire is devotion", et cetera, et cetera. This is the sacrifice you must really perform. So as we understand from what happens later on, this is the meaning that the Buddha really is conveying here, though the brahmin misunderstands him. So he says that when someone who really understands these things - that is in his sense - receives the offering at the time of sacrifice - and maybe the offering is the brahmin himself and his own life because in the end he goes for refuge - then the sacrifice prospers. You see what the Buddha is getting at or what he is saying? In a way he's speaking deliberately so that the brahmin won't quite understand him, but he's conveying his own meaning at the same time which the brahmin doesn't yet understand, but which he will understand. The Buddha knows what he himself really means. So then what does the brahman say?

Voice: "Then prosper shall this sacrifice indeed,
For here we see the type, the lore-adept!
Had we not seen the very signs in thee,
Another man had the oblation got.[161]

S: Yes, so the brahmin takes what the Buddha says at its face value. Then he says, "This sacrifice that I have performed will prosper indeed because we've got a real expert in these things in you." He is still sort of impressed by the little bit of Vedic knowledge that the Buddha has shown and is taking him for someone very much like himself, even though he might not be a brahmin. "Had we not seen the very signs in thee, another man had the

oblation got." I mean, we are very fortunate to have recognized the signs of a truly wise - i.e. well versed in brahminical tradition, man in you - otherwise somebody else would have been given the oblation. So then what does the Master say?

Voice: "Since thou, O brahman, in thy need dost come
With goal in view, I prithee ask of him,
Calm man, gone fume and stir and hope alike:
True sacrificial wisdom here may'st find."

S: So here is the clue to the Buddha's real meaning: "True sacrificial wisdom here may'st find." "If you ask me about these things, then you will understand the real meaning of sacrifice, you will understand that it isn't something external. It isn't what you have been doing. This is sort of characteristic of the Buddha's sort of gradual approach now. He originally, at the beginning, totally rejected everything that the brahmin stood for. But now he's adopting a different sort of approach, different tactics. He is saying sacrifice is all right, yes, and it is good to offer the remnants of the sacrifice to someone who understands about these things, but then he says, as it were "Well, what is the true sacrifice? Who really understands these things? The man who really understands is the Enlightened one." I mean, in other words, the Buddha himself. So ask him about the true sacrifice. Here the Buddha is adopting a slightly different approach. Do you see that?

Voice: I don't understand "in thy need dost come with goal in view".

S: Well, his need is for someone to receive his oblation. But again there is a double meaning, which the Buddha has in his own mind. The brahmin's real need is to know the truth, and what real sacrifice is all about.[162]

Voice: You're thinking more about the goal.

S: Well "attha". Well here again there is the same ambiguity. The goal that the brahmin has in mind is the success of that sacrifice. That sacrifice achieving its purpose, which is a purely worldly one, for somebody or other's benefit, for the brahmin's own or some clients. That is to say, increase of progeny, increase of cattle, heaven. But the attha, the goal, that the Buddha has in mind is nirvana.

"Since thou, O brahman, in they need dost come
With goal in view, I prithee ask of him,
Calm man, gone fume and stir and hope alike:
True sacrificial wisdom here may'st find."

The Buddha's approach in a way is quite subtle and with double meanings all the time. So what does the brahmin then say?

(461) "In offering is my delight, dear sir,
I long to make an offering, Gotama!
Teach me who know not, teach me, reverend sir,
Where prospers an oblation? Tell me that!"

S: So the brahmin is beginning to understand that there's more in what the Buddha says than at first sight appears. He's beginning to have some sort of suspicion what the Buddha is getting at. He's beginning to get an inkling of the fact that there's a kind of sacrifice which is better, more real, than the one he has been offering. But he still doesn't have much idea about it; he might just think that it's something bigger and better of the same kind. But he loves making offerings, he loves sacrificing, so he asks the Buddha to teach him, to explain to him.

So then, of course, the Buddha has the opportunity to expound his own particular point of view at some length. So we'll go into that now. But anyway, have you all followed the background, the introduction, as it were? Is that all quite clear? I mean the Buddha starts with

this tremendous rejection of everything the brahmin stands for, but after he lets up a bit and he lets the brahmin think that he too knows a bit about the brahminical system and religious tradition: Vedic knowledge. And the brahmin is quite impressed by that and thinks, "well maybe he's a sort of brahmin after all, or at least he seems to know what he is talking about." So he's thinking of making him the oblation after all. But then the Buddha starts suggesting that the sort of sacrifice that he know about is something even better than [163] what the brahmin is engaged in and suggests that the brahmin asks him about it, which the brahmin then does.

Voice: It also suggests that the brahmin was more like a village brahmin.

S: Yes, it may well be.

Voice: Was it the Buddha's custom to wander around on his own as if he was, sort of, looking for strategic places and people to ask him questions?

S: He is sometimes represented as going around on his own, but more often he had a companion, in the last years of his life especially: Ananda.

Voice: So maybe here he was seated with one or two disciples anyway.

S: Well it does say alone: "I homeless, untroubled here by youths attending me." That suggests that he is on his own. He is contrasting his sort of solitary state with that of the brahmin surrounded by all those sacrificial helpers. All right, let's see what the Buddha then says.

Voice: "Wherefore, brahman, bend low thine ear, and Dharma I will teach.

(462) Ask not of birth but of the faring ask!
From wood is awe-inspiring fire begot:
From lowly clan noble becomes the sage
Who steadfast and by modesty restrained,

(463) Truth-tamed, endued with temperance, adept
In lore and end, has the god-faring fared:
Timely on him let brahman seeking merit
In sacrifice his offering bestow.

S: "Ask not of birth but of the faring ask": Ma jatim puccha caranan ca pucca. Don't ask about jati, don't ask about caste or birth, and by implication anything worldly, anything conditioned. "Ask about the faring." So what is the word for faring? Carana. Carana means literally walking, faring. But also practising, also living. You get the idea? For instance in the salutation to the Buddha, there's "vijja-carana sampanno". Have you ever wondered what that meant? Vijja-carana sampanno, sugato lokavidu. Vijja-carana, what is vijja?[164]

Voice: I've always meant to read it up!

Voice: Knowledge.

S: Knowledge, vijja is knowledge. So what is carana?

Voice: Faring in knowledge?

S: Practice. It's knowledge and practice, the theoretical and the practical, or the principle and the application. And what is sampanno? Sampanno means endowed with, possessing. So the Buddha is described as the one who is endowed with, the one who possesses, in their fullness both vijja - knowledge - and carana - conduct or practice, or life. The one fully endowed with both theory and practice, principle and application. So this word carana and its derivatives are

very important. You get the same word in the term brahmachariya. Brahmachariya means the noble faring, the sublime faring, the lofty faring. The Dharmachariya, which means ... translated sometimes as the Dharma walk or the Dharma faring. But it's practising the Dharma, the Dharma life; the Bodhichariya: the bodhi walk, the bodhi faring, the bodhi practice, the bodhi life. And then what about the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in the Heart Sutra? "Ghambiram prajna paramita caramano": he was faring in the profound perfection of wisdom, practising the profound perfection of wisdom, living the profound perfection of wisdom. It's the same word, carana, chariya, caramano. So it's the walking, faring, practising, living; it means all these things. So, don't ask about caste, ask about the spiritual life, this is what the Buddha is saying. Don't ask about your present conditioned state or anybody's present conditioned state, ask about developing, ask about evolving. This is what he is saying. So you see the point of the distinction now? Don't ask about caste or birth, I mean that belongs to the conditioned world, the natural world, that is what you start from, that is what you are to begin with. But ask about carana, ask about faring, practising, living, in the spiritual sense. Ask about spiritual life, because that opens up the possibility of development beyond the given, beyond what you are now, beyond what you were at or from birth. So don't ask about the actual and the factual, ask about the possible and the potential. Don't ask about what you are, ask about what you can become, or don't ask me what I am, ask what you can become, ask what you [165] can develop into. Or, if you like, don't ask about the conditioned, ask about the way to the unconditioned. This is what the Buddha is saying, do you get the point?

So, "Ask not of birth but of the faring ask!
From wood is awe-inspiring fire begot:
From lowly clan noble becomes the sage
Who steadfast and by modesty restrained,
Truth-tamed, endued with temperance, adept
In lore and end, has the god-faring fared."

So the Buddha goes on to point out the relativity of birth. He says from wood is awe-inspiring fire begot - "kattha have jayati jatavedo". So fire is kindled from wood, wood is something, as it were, ordinary and ignoble. Fire is something sublime, something wonderful. So this sublime and wonderful fire is kindled from this ordinary, everyday wood. Perhaps we don't realize how wonderful this was to primitive man. Perhaps in the Buddha's day they still retained some trace of this, that you could rub two bits of wood together and produce flame. This must have meant a very great deal to primitive man, this sort of thing. Primitive man must have thought it something very wonderful, miraculous, magical: that you rub two pieces of wood together, two sticks, or you take a round stick and you rub it between your hands and when the lower end of that stick is in a socket in a block of wood the friction produces a spark and fire is produced. Then you can build up a huge, wonderful fire, a great blaze, a great bonfire, just by rubbing sticks together. It must have seemed absolutely magical and very mysterious to primitive man.

So there seems to be some trace of that lingering here still in the Buddha's day. "From wood is awe-inspiring fire begot." And in the same way, "from lowly clan noble becomes the sage," or as Chalmers renders it, "Mean birth may breed a sage noble and staunch and true."

So what exactly is the parallel? Just as in the same way as something as sublime and wonderful as fire springs from this lowly wood, in the same way a really wise, a really enlightened man may come from very lowly origins. So what has birth got to do with it? There is no point in asking about birth. So "from lowly clan noble becomes the sage who steadfast and by modesty restrained, truth tamed, endued with temperance, adept in lore and end has the god-faring fared: Timely on him let brahman seeking merit in sacrifice his offering bestow." In other words if you are looking for a really worthy person, someone to whom to give your oblation, someone to whom to give what is left over [166] from the sacrifice, don't ask about birth, that is quite beside the point. Just find out someone who is worthy, because just in the same way as fire is produced from wood, a very worthy, wise person, well versed in Vedic law, might have originated from a very lowly family. This is

what the Buddha says to begin with. He's trying to ease up on the brahmin's attachment to birth without altogether repudiating what he stands for. You see this? All right, let's carry on.

(end of side one)

(464) On them who, lusts forsaking, homeless fare,
The well controlled-of-self, as shuttle straight:
Timely on them let brahman seeking merit
In sacrifice his offering bestow.

S: So what is the Buddha doing? The brahmin is looking for someone to whom he can offer his oblation, someone worthy. So the Buddha now is introducing his own conception of who is a worthy person, or who is an Enlightened person really, irrespective of any sacrificial considerations. He is saying, well, this is the man to whom your oblations should be offered but in the end it becomes apparent that to a man of this sort no oblations should be offered at all. The whole idea of offering oblation becomes ridiculous, you realize that in the end. I mean, a person of that sort, the ideal person of the Buddha's conception, has got nothing to do with oblations anyway.

So the Buddha is now giving a straightforward exposition of his own conception of almost the ideal person, the Enlightened person. So let's just look at that verse by verse. "On them who lusts forsaking, homeless fare" - on them who giving up all attachment to the senses - agiha caranti, fare, practise, live - without a home. One can take this in two ways, to be without a home - I think we went into this a little bit yesterday, didn't we? It can mean literally without a home, but (also) without any particular framework - whether practical or theoretical - in which you, as it were, settle down. This is what is meant to be without a home.

"The well controlled-of-self", what word is that? Susamyatatta. That is the literal meaning: those whose self is well controlled, who are well controlled of self. This idea of controlled you get it in the Pali texts quite a lot. I think this is something that could be discussed, especially self control. And here you've got this expression susannatatta: well controlled of self, or having a self well controlled. Well this idea of self control is not, as it were, a very popular one nowadays. I mean, do people very often or very much think in terms of self control or practising self control?[167]

Voice: They seem to think that it's suppression or repression, something like that.

S: Yes, but the Pali text frequently mentions self control.

Voice: Well presumably something like that is much more acceptable in a society like that where people were quite used to freely indulging without any guilt or anything like that. So it was necessary to put on the brakes.

Voice: I think it can have a very positive meaning for us, I mean like we don't indulge our neurotic cravings, or at least ideally we don't. Self control in that respect.

S: I think the whole question of the motivation is very important. It's like the self control of an athlete who is getting ready for a big match or whatever. He has to control himself, in other words he has to accept certain limitations so that he can train properly. For instance he has to be self controlled with regard to things like alcohol, because he knows that if he drinks too much alcohol before the competition, the championship, he won't be up to standard, he won't be able to function properly, he won't be able to win. So he practises self control, he controls himself. It's rather like that. But self control seems one of the most unpopular virtues now, doesn't it?

Voice: Well it's given a very nasty sort of connotation, especially when what's his name, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, says, "What we all need is self control." I think that's one of his phrases he used in one of his most recent outbursts in the House of Lords.

S: But what do you think people like that mean when they talk in terms of self control?

Voice: Well, it means, in that practical sense, usually, sort of putting down, ... I don't know, it leads to repression, especially sexual repression.

S: Well is repression or suppression necessarily always out of order? Or is, I mean, suppression to be distinguished from [168] repression.

Voice: Well, yes.

S: Technically, repression is an unconscious process, so to the extent that it is unconscious, it is not a good thing from the Buddhist point of view, because you don't know that you are doing it. But suppression means a deliberate, aware, keeping in check of something. So suppression is different from repression. So could one say that one should never suppress or never control or never hold in check. Could one say that?

Voice: People do don't they?

S: So in other words, what is the place in human development of positive self control, of suppression as distinct from repression? Or is there not a more positive term than suppression even? Isn't it more like holding in check or rein? I mean, Plato has got the simile of the horses drawing the chariot, and one of them is a good obedient horse and the other is rather fiery and needs a lot of handling. But you don't kill the horse, or you don't maim the horse, but you keep him on a firm rein. Self control is more like this. I mean, repression is saying, "No, there is no horse there. Who says there is a horse there? I've not got any horse drawing my chariot, my chariot is drawn by angels. (laughter) There is no horse there." That is repression. Suppression is saying what a vicious, bad tempered horse and gelding him. You could say that is more like suppression. Or hamstringing him, or tying two of his legs together so he can't gallop so fast. That, you could say, is suppression. But self control is just keeping a very firm rein and using the energy of the horse for your purposes, in your way. Not letting the horse do things his way. Self control is more like that. So self control is more like the wise guiding and directing of energy, and this is certainly required, always, in one's individual development. You don't repress, perhaps you don't even suppress, but you control and guide and direct. You channel, in other words.

Voice: Does this kind of link up with authority based on ... powers? In a sense it isn't neurotic, it's just weak.[169A]

S: Ah. So what was the old archbishop getting at really, do you think? What was he really advocating or recommending? Surely, do you think it was self control in this sense or something else?

Voice: Suppression of everything that wasn't socially acceptable or...

S: Or acceptable to the church. He even wanted the suppression, he even wanted the suppression, if that is the word, of lots of things which are socially acceptable nowadays, and he was annoyed that they had become socially acceptable, perhaps rightly so in certain cases. But perhaps his remedy wasn't the correct one. It's as though within the context of Christianity, Christian thinking and morals, it's as though you can't do right. You've just got to scrap the whole thing almost and start all over again with some other principles, some other ideals, because when the archbishop, or someone like the archbishop, speaks in that way, the overall effect is to motivate or activate people's feelings of guilt. That they are being wicked, that they are being bad, and therefore to alleviate those feelings of guilt they have got to behave in a certain way, give up behaving in a certain way. This is the net result really, to make people feel guilty, and after that feeling of guilt, to behave in a certain way.

Of course if he was asked this he'd deny it, and maybe quite sincerely, and say that, no, he wanted you to act out of love of God and Jesus and so on, which is very positive, and not act

out of guilt. He might agree with you, but the effect of his words - in view of all those centuries of Christian conditioning - the effect of his words would be to make people feel guilty - those who took him seriously - and to behave in a way that he recommends in order to alleviate those feelings of guilt. That would be the net result.

Voice: I'd like to follow on something that Devamitra said, which is a good basic statement, not indulging in neurotic patterns and so on, craving. I would like to develop that and suggest that over-indulgence in food and all the other things actually display that in fact one has got a lot of energy but one isn't using it properly. And things like over-eating, over-indulging, in various dead-end things is a very quick, convenient way of using up that energy. And if you do stop, that in effect ...[169B]

S: But does a healthy person want to use up energy? Can't a healthy person sort of lie fallow until the opportunity presents itself of expressing the energy positively and creatively?

Voice: Yes, why does that happen?

Voice: Well, because it was like the point that was made yesterday about not being able to stay with one's own inner emptiness or whatever.

S: Well here it is not even emptiness, it is fullness.

Voice: But you might be restless. I mean...

S: I mean, for instance, if you have got a lot of energy why do you put it into a dead-end thing instead of putting it into something creative and positive?

Ratnapani: The energy must be a bit squiffy if it can go into a dead-end thing, if it doesn't spontaneously go into something creative.

S: Or just, as it were, remain quiescent, in abeyance, until the right opportunity offers.

Voice: I know in my own case if I cut out certain things and get into more positive things, all the energy that, it's like I was killing time indulging in these areas of things when I should have been getting into more positive things, developing ...

S: But this word "should" is very suspicious, the fact that one has to use that word at all. I mean what does one mean by saying you got into all these other things when you should have been getting into something really positive and creative, for instance?

Voice: Because the energy had that...

S: So as Ratnapani says there must have been something squiffy (to use his word) in the energy to begin with. Otherwise it would not have gone into those sort of wasteful channels, it would have [170] gone straight into its natural, creative, positive outlet.

Voice: It strikes me that if energy is stimulated by a neurotic state of mind, then it will seek a neurotic outlet. Not that the energy is neurotic, but it will seek a neurotic act.

Voice: It must be neurotic energy if it comes from a neurotic source.

S: Well it's like polluted water, you say that the water itself is polluted or that the pollution is in the water. It is just two different ways of speaking. It comes to the same thing practically in the end.

Voice: I'm really mystified by this. There's this thing of compulsive work... I'm just trying to think.

Voice: I thought that, for instance, if you cut out certain things, certain dead-end things, that you know to be bad, it gives you more energy to do other things.

S: To some extent that is true. I mean, for instance, if you observe silence and you cut out unnecessary talking you do get an increase of energy, that is quite true. But I don't think you can apply this too generally, if you stop doing this and you stop doing that and you give up something else, then with all that energy that is left you can do something really positive and creative. I don't think it really quite works in that way. Well, it's in a way starting from the wrong end. You have to start from the healthy positive desire to do this or do that and gradually bring all one's other energies, including one's other minor neurotic energies, into line with, into harmony with, that. But you don't necessarily create a fund of positive energy just by forcibly blocking off all your neurotic outlets.

Voice: That's not quite what I meant. In my case the initial positive activity was already there.

S: Well in that case I would say that there is no problem. The only problem there might be is with, if you were mistaken and that energy that you thought was positive was not in fact positive, [171] but was in fact at least tainted with something neurotic. But if that main, central energy was positive then everything else sooner or later comes into line with it.

Voice: Well, basically what happens is that certain things that I had been indulging in, I eventually discovered as I got more into the work that they were getting in the way. So it was this, you know, as we said yesterday, getting one's priorities right.

S: Hmm. (pause) So where does that leave us with regard to self control and the Archbishop of Canterbury? What I was trying to do was get people to see the difference between self control as I have outlined it here, as the right direction of energy, and self control in the sense of an attempt to activate or reactivate guilt feelings in such a way as to oblige you to conform to a certain conditioned pattern of behaviour which was socially or religiously acceptable. These two are quite different things. Self control is something, obviously, that only a free or relatively free person can do. I mean self control presupposes awareness, and mindfulness, a certain sense of direction, a certain firmness with oneself. Whereas if it's a question of activating guilt feelings then you are being played on and you don't really know what you are doing, you are passive. Do you see the difference?

Voice: In one of the songs of Milarepa he talks about, well he's obviously very ascetic, but he says something like, "renouncing of worldly things without meditation on the mystic truths amounts to vain self torture." As if you've got to have a positive activity there.

Voice: It's like this difference between repression and suppression. When you repress you sort of put a block on the energy, but you were saying about it being like a changing of the energy.

S: Yes.

Voice: That's sort of like another grey, added, advanced sort of suppression isn't it? I've only really been sort of conscious I think maybe from lectures and things, of repression being [172] unconscious and suppression being conscious. But this isn't ...

S: Yes it does seem like that. I mean, you can speak in terms of repression, suppression, and direction if you like, direction of energies. Suppression is usually a temporary expedient.

Voices: Yes.

S: Whereas self control is a much more long term thing, isn't it? But I think perhaps we should talk much more in terms of self control, in a positive sense, in the sense of directing energy, especially in the light of a long term goal.

Voice: Self direction.

S: Self direction, yes. Self control is self direction. Yes.

Voice: It does seem to be a much more natural sort of thing.

S: Yes. But doing just what you feel like doing, following every whim or fancy, letting it all hang out. That seems to be the modern ideal. Which seems to be going to the other extreme. So that's the lowest level of all, perhaps it's even lower than repression in some ways, or at least not higher than repression, and certainly lower than suppression. What would be a word for that? Self-indulgence, perhaps.

Voice: It can clear blockages though, if you do it temporarily.

S: Yes, if you do it temporarily, but then if you just do it temporarily that is a sort of mindful thing. That is part of your overall strategy for directing or redirecting energy. First of all you must have the energy at your disposal and that means freeing it up. And that perhaps means letting it out a little bit at first, or quite a lot, but with this overall objective in view. Whereas the self-indulgent person lets it out for the sake of letting it out or just for the sake of the kick that he or she experiences in the course of doing that.

Voice: Can I just ask about guilt? It seems that it's very easy to arouse people's feelings of guilt. I've heard you comment [173] on this before. I just wondered if in fact you could say a bit more about it.

S: I've already said quite a lot in the past. What have I not said, what is lacking?

Voice: It's just it seems a very difficult area when you are dealing with people.

S: Well, what is guilt? In a way we touched upon it a bit this morning. There is quite a difference, although sometimes it seems a very fine difference, between a sense of shame, in the Buddhistic sense, in the sense of hiri or hrih, and a feeling of guilt. So where exactly does the difference lie? The feeling of guilt seems to be connected with the fear of the withdrawal of affection. Do you see that? This is something I've mentioned before. For instance, when you are very, very small, somebody says to you, "If you do that Mummy won't love you any more." So you are a terrified of doing that because you know that if you do it Mummy is going to withdraw her love. So you feel that if you do it you will forfeit Mummy's love. But later on in your life you may do it, therefore you feel that you have forfeited Mummy's love, that Mummy doesn't love you any more, that you are a bad boy, and this is your feeling of guilt: I have done something which has cost me my Mother's love, or Father's love, or Auntie's love, or whoever's - or the love of the family or the love of the group.

So guilt seems to be very much tied up with that: the feeling that you have forfeited love by what you are doing, but at the same time maybe you very much want to do that thing, you can't stop doing it perhaps. So guilt seems to be, at least in part, the feeling that you get when you do something which you know certain people will disapprove of and which you know the doing of which has cost you their love, so that in fact they do not love you any more, or if they found out, that they would not love you any more. So this also can be transferred or applied to God: God has said that you shouldn't do certain things, but you have done those things, you have gone against God's will, so God, in a way, doesn't love you any more, God is angry with you, God disapproves of you. But you can't stop doing those things, and if you are a Protestant Christian you have no recourse even to confession. Because if you are a Catholic you can go along every Saturday night or Friday night and say, [174] "Sorry God, I shouldn't have done that please forgive me," you are forgiven, you are absolved, and you feel much better. But the Protestant doesn't have that. In the case of the Protestant it builds up. So guilt seems to be associated with this: not just fear of the withdrawal of love, but with the sense that one has actually forfeited love, lost love, and is no longer lovable, no longer worthy. One is unworthy, unlovable, despicable.

Voice: There is that element of self condemnation.

S: Yes. So guilt seems to be very much of this kind.

Voice: It also displays one's inability to stand alone.

S: Yes, that you need somebody's love, somebody's approval.

Voice: But if, say, it seems that certain people feel guilty because they fear they are going to lose your affection or the affection of the group or whatever. Is there a good way of countering that, a good counterpart?

S: Well it does tie up very much with what I was saying this morning about paying regards to the feeling of your peers about yourself. But there would seem to be two kinds of sensitivity to other people's opinion: one as it were infantile, and the other mature. In the case of the infantile need for other people's approval you just can't get along without it, you are really desperate for it, you really need it, you almost can't survive without it. But in the case of the approval of your peers on the part of a healthy-minded person, a positive person, a mature person, you'd like it but you can get along without it. So it isn't so catastrophic for you if that approval is withdrawn. But also there is this aspect that if you do what your peers disapprove of you are out of contact, you are out of communication with them, and you value that communication for its own sake, and you wish it to continue. So therefore you realize that if you do certain things, or if you behave in a certain way, that your peers, your true friends, are not going to approve of, it means that you are going to get out of touch with them by doing it, you are going to get off the same wavelength and therefore out of communication. [175] And this you don't want; not because you are neurotically dependent on it but because it is of positive value, of growth-oriented value in your life. So when you need other people's approval in an infantile way it is because you can't survive without it. But when you need it in an objective, healthy, mature way it is because it is difficult for you to develop without it.

So that still doesn't really deal with what you were asking about. It is very easy to get people to do things for you by activating their guilt feelings. So one really must not do this. But how is one to avoid it? And how are to get them to do things for you which are necessary without working on their guilt feelings? I think that you have to first of all convince them that you do like them and wish them well for their own sake, that they don't have to be good so far as you are concerned, in that old infantile way. They don't have to please you. Your way of dealing with them, your attitude towards them, must be very mature, you must tend to treat them very much as an equal and not encourage their feelings of infantile dependence and desire for approval and all that, but treat them in a much more adult sort of fashion. But it will be quite a long job in many cases, and sometimes one might be quite tempted because it is very easy to work on people's guilt feelings. And by working on them you can get things done very quickly.

Voice: You can get your way too.

S: You can get your way, yes.

Voice: A very insidious way of doing that, people who do that, is that they first of all give you that approval. They come along and sort of stroke you and pat you on the head and coo all over you they say, "Of course you'll do that won't you."

S: Yes, "You're such a nice person, you're so helpful, you're so kind, you are not like some who would refuse to do it, would you? You'd never refuse if I asked you, well, would you mind doing this," you know. It really puts you on the spot doesn't it? They give you a reputation and then they make you live up to it. It is in some ways better to have a bad reputation and then no one expects very much of you. (laughing)

Voice: In that way if there is any grain of immaturity you [176] want more of what they are giving you.

S: Yes, just feed you with lumps of sugar. Anyway we have come a little way from the well controlled of self. I think we will soon have to close. "As shuttle straight." As straight as a shuttle. What is that phrase? Tasaram va ujjū. This is where the word tasara comes from, it means a shuttle, and ujjū is straight: as straight as a shuttle, or we'd say straight as a die wouldn't we? So the self controlled person is straight. Is there any connection there, is there any particular reason?

Voice: He knows where he is going.

S: He knows where he is going, his energies are all going in one direction, straight to the mark. So the self-controlled person is the person who is straight as a die, straight as a shuttle.

Voice: In all ways: the way he walks, the way he talks...

S: In all ways, yes. Straightforward, yes. And this we notice very much in the case of Bimbisara and the Buddha. They are very straight with each other, all their energies are there, smack on the mark, as it were. No beating about the bush, very direct, very open, very honest. Also here is another aspect of this question of self control, especially the neurotic self control through guilt, that there is a sort of schism, a dichotomy in you between a controller and the controlled. Do you see what I mean? There is, as it were, a part of you that is trying to control and another part of you that is being controlled and is struggling not to be controlled. And in this way there is a split, and your energy goes into this battle. And this is very often what happens, we waste our energy in this sort of conflict.

Voice: Pseudo-asceticism.

S: One could say that. So therefore it is important to get all the energies, all the different aspects, all the different parts of one's being all moving in the same direction, at least in principle, and not to have too much of one's energy locked up in this sort of struggle. This is also the struggle of want and should, or want and ought. I want to do this but I ought to do that, [177] I ought to do this but I want to do that. One shouldn't as far as possible let oneself get into that sort of situation.

Voice: Is this a widespread conflict? Because one sees people who do seem to suffer conflict of some sort.

S: I see quite a bit of it in the Friends.

Voice: That's what I mean, within the Friends.

S; Yes, and I think it is very important to have some wanting within the sphere of the Dharma. For instance, several people consulted me about meditation, especially people at Sukhavati, that they couldn't meditate for the whole period, for fifty minutes, but they thought that they ought to. So they were doing it but they weren't enjoying it. So I said, well, don't do that, even if it's ten minutes, even if it fifteen minutes, if you enjoy it. Because if the whole of your spiritual life comes to be on the ought side and none of it is on the want side you are in a very dangerous position. Do you see what I mean? So if all the things you want to do are worldly things, and all the things you ought to do are spiritual things, well there is going to be tremendous conflict. (laughing) You are going to lose out in the end, you are going to opt out in the end. So it is very important to keep some measure of enjoyment and wanting and creativity and positivity on the Dharma side of the ledger, as it were.

Voice: So forbid people to meditate occasionally so that they will want to do it perhaps?

S: It's much better to have a short meditation that you enjoy than sit for a long one that you don't enjoy but you do it because you think you ought to.

Voice: Or you feel guilty because everybody else seems to be doing much better than you are.

Voice: I've sometimes sat through quite a long meditation, really not getting anything from it, really not enjoying it, out of feeling guilty. If I give up I am going to disturb other people, and all that sort of thing.[178]

S: Yes.

Voice: There's also, presumably, a healthy determination and conviction that if I just sit here I will make progress, so I don't care whether I enjoy it or not.

S: Yes, there is that too, but you must be, in a way, pleased to do that, in a way almost enjoy it, in a heroic sort of way. Some people can.

Voice: If you are just miserable you can't really do anything.

S: Yes, especially if you get resentful and feel that you are being made to do something that you don't want to do. So it's very important to keep this feeling of wanting to grow, wanting to develop, wanting to study, wanting to meditate, even if it means you keep the time you devote to things down a bit, limit the time. But at least that doesn't matter if you are enjoying it while you are doing it, however short the time may be. But to get that association of enjoyment with study and meditation, and all the rest of it, that is very, very important - the dhammarati, or the rejoicing or delighting in the Dharma - otherwise if all the things you ought to do are the things you don't like doing, and all the things you like doing are things you ought not to do, well there is going to be a terrific conflict, especially if you feel the "ought" rather strongly.

Voice: What happens if you want to do more than you actually find it possible to do?

S: Well it depends what you mean by possible, whether it's possible according to circumstances, time, energy, or in some other sense. One would always like to do more than one actually does, but one has also to accept and recognize one's human limitations. One would like to be in four or five different places at once, (laughing) but one can't be. One would like to be able to talk to four or five different people at the same time, but one can't, one can only talk to them one at a time. That places certain limitations on one's communication. I think it's quite healthy to want to do a bit more than you actually do, that keeps you [179] a bit on your toes.

Voice: I get quite frustrated, I mean most of the time, in that sort of thing, of wanting, say, to meditate for longer or something like that, and maybe just finding it impossible.

S: I think one has to be a bit suspicious of wanting to meditate longer. I think it's more important to put the emphasis on wanting to meditate better, which may mean, for the present, keeping your hours of meditation short, so that in the long run you may meditate better, and you don't put yourself off it for good by forcing yourself to sit too long.

Voice: So the principle here seems to be that in all of us here we must have some Dharma activity, or activity within the Dharma, which we really enjoy.

S: Yes, I think that's very important.

Voice: And if you get into that, and eventually anything of a more worldly nature that gets in the way will be got rid of because it is getting in the way of something you enjoy doing.

S: Yes. (pause) I think you are in a quite serious, quite dangerous, position if there's not much in life that you enjoy doing. It's very important to keep that sense of enjoyment and zest. And you can lead that, little by little, and lead your energies with it in the right direction, through the positive self control. It is very important to keep the channels of communication open between your energies and your enjoyment.

Voice: It wasn't so long ago I felt underneath, just underneath, the surface I shouldn't enjoy what I was doing. And it was really quite a strong feeling.

S: Well this is, perhaps, a leftover from your Christian attitude: that if you are enjoying yourself you must be doing something wicked.

Voice: Something like that.[180]

S: If it's good it always hurts, yes?

Voice: It seems in fact that happiness is a necessary by-product of the spiritual life.

S: Yes, well this is certainly the Buddhist view.

Voice: I think there is another important thing to remember and that is one is on one's own path. And that although it is good to be inspired by the progress that other people are making, it inspires one to make a little more effort oneself. And not feel really bad and low because somebody else appears to be doing far better than you, and that you have got your next step and that you are at a particular stage yourself and you shouldn't try and force it, to try and jump three stages at once.

S: Yes.

Voice: It's difficult sometimes, it may sound a bit odd but it is difficult, you sometimes don't enjoy something until after you've done it. At the time when you are doing it you don't particularly feel that you are enjoying it or not enjoying it.

S: Yes, you are just doing it.

Voice: Yes. It's only afterwards you look back and think, oh, I really enjoyed doing that.

S: Well this is almost a sign that you are not enjoying it, if you start wondering whether you are enjoying it. If you are really enjoying doing it you don't bother whether you are enjoying it or not. The thought doesn't occur to you does it? You don't need to know if you are enjoying it or not. If you really are enjoying doing it then the enjoyment becomes irrelevant, you are so much into what you are doing.

Voice: Actually what I have experienced in this respect is a sort of greyness doing something, just trying to get it out of the way. Then there's a fantastic flush of positive feeling when it is all over and you look at it with pride and feel really good about it, and yet wish you could have had [181] that feeling while doing it, just that flow of energy while doing it.

S: That's more like relief that it is all over and done with. (laughter)

Voice: But nevertheless really pleased with the results.

S: Also a sense of self congratulation that you had that strength of will and purpose and determination to do it all and finish it, even though you didn't like doing it. I don't know that that is all that healthy though. (laughter)

Voice: I'd much rather enjoy doing it at the time.

S: Yes.

Voice: Atula and I had that, putting the carpet down at Pundarika. We loathed every single sweaty minute of it, but afterwards we came out and both felt fantastic when it was all over. We both regretted, we both said at the same time that we regretted, having wasted a day being miserable when we could have been happy, just by the flick of a psychological switch,

probably.

S: Well one realizes that there's just a sort of hair's breadth between feeling miserable and feeling happy. The same energy is there, you just have to sort of flick the switch, as you say.

Voice: There's this current phrase around, isn't there, "what you need is some good hard work." But what you need is some enjoyable work, do it well and with energy but...

S: Well hard meaning putting in a lot of energy or into which energy is flowing, not into which energy is being pushed. (pause)

Voice: You have to push to begin with, a little bit.

S: I think you have to start with the flow of energy, if you can push a bit later on, but I think it's important to start [182/183] with a spontaneous flow of energy. And just to keep quiet and keep still until you get some experience of that, somehow. And then gently guide it into various channels.

Ratnapani: I found that working at Sukhavati, with jobs that I don't particularly like, I've had to sometimes just walk round and round and up and down until something comes which just makes it possible to start it, which is not a flow of energy, just sufficient trickle to make it feasible to pick up the tools. Before that I couldn't even manage that.

(end of tape six)

S: Yes.

Voice: And then the energy might pick up later with the effort.

S: Yes, because sometimes you do get energy in the process of doing the job, in some strange way.

Ratnapani: Yes, I find myself quite secretly enjoying this horrible task after a bit.

S: Sometimes there's just a sort of relatively superficial layer of resistance that has to be broken through, and once you've broken through that you know you really can get into the job and you find that you've a lot of energy and are quite enjoying it. Or maybe you're almost feeling surprised that you are enjoying it, having broken through that initial resistance.

Voice: Enjoyment seems to come with interest and one can get involved, absorbed in the job.

S: Yes.[184]

Voice: I mean, it's when you're sort of out from the thing that you get bored, fed up with it.

S: You have to give yourself to the job. It means you have to have a certain amount of confidence and faith, believe in what you are doing.

Ratnapani: You can almost see people sometimes with their self or self image between them and the work that they are doing. Keeping away from it.

Chintamani: ...(inaudible)... a lone activity, an activity in which you're completely alone and not beholden to anybody.

Ratnapani: Just you and the job and that's it.

Voice: Sometimes you might enjoy a job more when you are doing it with someone else, working with someone else.

Voice: I can see that in, say, going to a concert where you can nudge the guy next to you. I don't know about...

Voice: I suppose, I mean, that you could be distracted by someone, you know what I mean.

Voice: I must say, I was thinking, if you're in charge of the job, I guess it makes the job a bit more challenging.

S: Anyway let's end on that very positive word, challenging.

(end of session)[185]

S: So you remember how far we got? We were reading about Bharadvaja. He'd finished his sacrifice and he was looking for someone to whom to offer the oblation, the remnant that remained over from the sacrifice, and seeing the Buddha in the distance he thought he might be a worthy recipient. On approaching, however, he discovered that he was, apparently, a shramana, a shaveling, so he was at first inclined not even to think of making an offering to him. But then it occurred to him that perhaps he was a brahmin. After all, some brahmins even shaved their heads. So he approached and asked him if he was a brahmin. And then, of course, the Buddha tells him not to ask about birth but to ask about the spiritual life, and in this way a discussion ensues between them. And gradually the Buddha tries to put across his ideal of the worthy person. Not just worthy in the narrow brahminical sense of receiving the oblation, in receiving the remnant of the sacrifice, but worthy in a much higher sense. Eventually he puts across his ideal of the real individual, the Enlightened person. So the greater part of the sutta is therefore devoted to that. The Buddha is putting across to Bharadvaja who the really worthy person, the really Enlightened person is. What he is like. So we've got into a few verses of that. So the Buddha says at the beginning, "Ask not of birth but of the faring ask!" Faring in the sense of practice and spiritual life.

"From wood is awe-inspiring fire begot:
From lowly clan noble becomes the sage
Who steadfast and by modesty restrained,

(463) Truth tamed, endued with temperance, adept
In lore and end, has the god-faring fared:
Timely on him let brahman seeking merit
In sacrifice his offering bestow.

(464) On them who, lusts forsaking, homeless fare,
The well controlled-of-self, as shuttle straight:
Timely on them let brahman seeking merit
In sacrifice his offering bestow

So let's go on from there. That's as far as we got yesterday. Let's go round the circle reading a verse at a time and then we'll discuss anything that needs to be discussed. Let's start afresh shall we?

Ratnapani:

(465) The passionless with faculties composed
And freed as moon from Rahu's dark eclipse:
Timely on them let brahman seeking merit
In, etc.[186]

S: You have to go back to the last verse where it's mentioned "In sacrifice his offering bestow". All right, let's look at that. The text says "Ye vitaraga susamahitindriya". Ye vitaraga. Vitaraga is translated as passionless, which is quite good. Raga is very strong violent passion, and vitaraga is free from that. So the ideal person is free from this strong violent

passion, unskilful passion. I don't know whether one can within the Pali context speak of "skilful passion", but it is significant that in the Tantric they do speak of Maharaga - the great passion, in a very positive sense. What one must be careful not to do is to suggest that by being passionless you are devoid of energy. In English, at least, the word passionless has a slightly negative ring, as though you know passion has disappeared, passion has passed away, all passion is spent and with, as it were, nothing left, it's calm and peaceful but in a sort of negative sense. But we mustn't think of passionless as being like that. The Buddha himself is described as passionless, as vitaraga, but he was a man of immense or intense activity and tremendous energy, right up until the day of his death even. So we must be careful not to confuse passionlessness with lack of energy. Do you see what I mean? Can you imagine someone who is free of passion in this sort of sense, but also full of energy? Is it very easy to imagine or rather difficult to imagine?

Chintamani: Well I would have thought that if you were full of passion in the negative sense, you wouldn't have much energy to do anything else. One would block the other.

S: No. What I'm thinking of is a person who is bursting with passionate, violent, fiery energy, (and) rushes around doing all sorts of things in a very unbalanced, excitable sort of a way. You get quite a few people of this sort in political life. I'm not thinking of passion simply in the sexual sense. Raga doesn't mean that; it means any violent emotion of an outward-going nature. That is raga. But vitaraga means being free from that. We see a lot of this as it were fiery uncontrolled vehement emotion in public life, on political platforms and so forth. So it is that sort of passion, that sort of excitability, that sort of energy that one is to be free from. But that doesn't mean relaxing into a dull, inert, just quietly calm state. I mean the Bodhisattva is immensely active, but the Bodhisattva is free from passion. So one has to try and get this idea of immense energy and immense activity, without that passionate quality that usually attaches to energy [187] and activity in the world.

Devamitra: I'm not quite clear what you mean by passionate quality, actually. Do you mean intensity of energy?

S: No. One could say that, well, first of all there would be craving, which means the possibility of anger and also delusion. But perhaps the easiest way of describing that quality is to say that it is egoistic, it is the assertion of a self, it is the assertion of an ego, it is a will, basically. This is what is at the bottom of it. It is not the free-flow of a natural power.

Devamitra: Yes.

S: The energy is flowing from that person, as it were, not through that person.

Devamitra: Sorry, I got lost again, in which instance is it...?

S: In the case of the passion as something willed, it's something which goes through the channel of this particular ego.

Voice: Yes.

S: Not through it; from it and of it. It's not sort of impersonal higher spiritual energy which is merely flowing through that particular personality or that particular individuality. And also passionate energy is out of control. Whereas energy which is not passionate is, as it were, under control. I mean, not even under control in the dualistic sense, the sense of control does not arise, it goes in the right direction spontaneously. It doesn't even have to be directed or guided in the right direction.

Voice: So it's more natural energy, a more, just there, if you like.

S: It's not natural in the mundane sense, because natural energy would be full of craving, full of anger, full of delusion. It's purified of those things, but it is still energy, it's a calm equable

energy, you could even say a placid energy.[188]

Devamitra: But even though it's a placid energy, presumably that also does not rule out the possibility of, I don't know, just a tremendous force.

S: No, it doesn't rule that out, certainly not.

Devamitra: A sort of strength of putting over something.

S: Hmm.

Voice: But you don't do it, it does itself.

S: Yes, but in the case also of the passions sometimes you can be taken over by a passion. And you're taken over then by something negative and unskilful. But you can be taken over by something positive and skilful in much the same way, but on a different level, a higher level, to the accompaniment of, or in, awareness and mindfulness, which is totally absent in the case of passion in the ordinary sense taking you over. But what I am trying to put across is the idea of someone who is passionless not simply relaxing into a state of inertia. This is what we usually tend to think if someone is passionless or passion free. They just stay quiet, they don't do anything, they seem lacking in energy compared with the ordinary exuberant worldly person. But it isn't really like that. There is an energy which is not passionate. Or you could say that there is a passion which is positive, which is what the Tantrics call the great passion.

Devamitra: Could you say more about that?

S: No, I won't say any more about it at the moment. That will take us a bit away from the text. But this is all in comment on just this one word vitaraga. Yes, passion free, passionless. This is quite an accurate translation. But then what comes next? "Susamahitindriya" which is translated by Chalmers as "in peace have found release" which won't do at all. "With faculties composed" Hare translates, which is pretty literal, but doesn't really tell us very much. Indriya. Do you know what the indriyas are?

Voice: The paths.[189]

S: Indriyas are strictly speaking faculties. The indriyas are the senses, the sense faculties, primarily or in the first place. That is to say, eye, ear, nose, tongue, touch, and mind. These are the faculties. Then you've got the spiritual faculties: the indriyas in the sense of faith and wisdom, meditation and energy. That's samadhi and virya and mindfulness. Also late on in the Abhidharma there are many other indriyas. There's a whole list of twenty-two, which really isn't very relevant here. It's not clear here whether the indriyas referred to are simply the five sense faculties - because in Pali what we call the spiritual faculties are simply called faculties, indriyas without any prefix or any adjective - or whether both are being referred to. Anyway, no need to go into that at the moment. What does susamahita mean? Su is well or happily, samahita is balanced or poised, and this is a quite important word in Pali, to be balanced or poised, or in a state of equilibrium. Do you get the idea? Do you get the meaning? Which also suggests a state of stability, a state of harmony. The word samahita, being in a state of equilibrium, being balanced or poised, is also connected with samadhi, the word we normally translate as meditation.

So, "ye vitaraga susamahitindriya" means this: that he who is passion free and whose faculties, whether sense faculties or spiritual faculties or both, are in a state of happy equilibrium. Right, let's go into this a little bit more. Taking, it says, the physical senses, the sense faculties, how could one's sense faculties be in a state of equilibrium?

Ratnapani: Neither wanting or gluttoned.

S: Yes, neither wanting or gluttoned.

Devamitra: A state of contentment.

S: A state of contentment, yes.

Voice: And also in the case of the five spiritual faculties.

S: Let's deal with the physical senses first. In what other ways would they be said to be balanced? Neither wanting or craving, content. Is there some sort of idiom that you would use with [190] regard to your own sense faculties? Don't forget the mind is also included here. The mind is the sixth sense faculty or sense organ. Would you use this idiom and say that your senses were in a state of equilibrium? Meaning your five senses and your mind, would you say that? Or how would you put it?

Voice: Peacefulness, being peaceful.

S: Hmm, peaceful, yes.

Voice: Quietude.

S: Quietude, but what is the quietude of the senses and of the mind?

Devamitra: It comes about when... It presupposes a sort of psychological integration.

S: Yes. Not only a psychological integration but a sort of healthy, natural, skilful functioning. Look at it the other way round. What would be an unbalanced functioning of the sense faculties including the mind? How would the eye function in an unbalanced way?

Voice: It would be unbalanced.

S: Distracted.

Voice: Oh, it's like "in the seeing, just the seeing."

S: Hmm. It is very much like that. In a way it's not just the senses themselves; it really comes down to the mind, doesn't it? How would the mind, the sixth sense faculty, be in a state of equilibrium and balance and poise?

Aloka: It wouldn't react.

S: Not reacting. Possibly responding, but just being aware and just being mindful. It's more like a state of repose of the faculties. I mean, that the faculties aren't going out in a sort of irritable, neurotic way. They're there, they're just ready. You can use them when they need to be used. In this way they're said to be composed, or in a state of repose, or in a state of [191] balance. And it is also said that as a result of meditation not only does the mind become composed but the senses become composed. So with regard to the eye, you are not looking anxiously here and there, not looking for something to look at. You're just looking. If there is something there to be seen you see it, but you're not anxiously looking for something to see, or listening for something to hear. So when you're in that sort of condition, which obviously depends on the state of the mind, the mind sense, then you are said to be composed, or in a state of repose of the senses.

All right, what about the indriyas in the sense of the five spiritual faculties? In what sense could they be said to be balanced or in a state of harmony, or repose, or equilibrium?

Devamitra: When two pairs of opposites are in balance.

S: Yes. The two pairs of opposites being, of course, faith and wisdom and meditation and vigour, balanced through mindfulness. So it's not only a case of being balanced, it's also a

question of something else. What is that?

Voice: (unclear)

S: No I wasn't thinking of that. It's also a question of them being well developed in themselves. It's not that you'd have a weak faith balanced by a weak understanding or a tiny bit of meditation balanced by a tiny bit of vigour. You must have a very vigorous, a very ardent, faith, balanced by a very profound, penetrating, understanding. And in the same way a very deep and very stable meditation balanced by a very lively energy, a very vigorous energy, and a very keen awareness balancing and co-ordinating all four. So it isn't only a question of balancing the faculties, but of developing the faculties to their full extent and balancing them on ever higher and higher levels.

So you notice the juxtaposition here of these two terms *vitaraga* and *susamahitindriya*: freedom from passion and balance. So it suggests perhaps that being passionate is to be in a state of imbalance. Perhaps this is one of the characteristics of passion: it can fly to the opposite extreme very easily. You can be very much for something one minute, at least one day, and very much against it the next day. This is very characteristic of passion; [192] it's very powerful but highly reactive and can easily fly to the opposite extreme. Just as you can be violently in love with someone one day or even one minute, and hate them equally violently the next minute, so to be passionless is not to be without energy, but to be not in a state of imbalance, not to go flying off to extremes, not to react violently, but on the other hand to be well balanced in all one's faculties - whether sense faculties, including the mind, or higher spiritual faculties. So here what the Buddha is saying is the Enlightened man is the balanced man, not the unbalanced man. Passion results in imbalance; passionlessness results in balance; balance implies passionlessness. So this also introduces or suggests the idea of the all-round development, which is very important; that the spiritual life is not a one sided affair, but that you need to develop various aspects of yourself, various aspects of your individuality - the so-called emotional, the so-called intellectual, the so-called introvert, the so-called extrovert - and unify them all through mindfulness. You need to have both devotion and understanding. You need to be both meditative and active, and mindful all the time.

So in this verse the Buddha is saying to those who are free from passion, to those who are not unbalanced, to those who are in fact balanced in all their faculties, well balanced, happily balanced, whether in respect of their sense faculties or their higher spiritual faculties, who have won deliverance, just like the moon freeing itself from the jaws of Rahu... (Do you know who Rahu is? Rahu is the demon of the eclipse, and when the moon is eclipsed it is said poetically to have been swallowed by Rahu, or to be in the jaws of Rahu. Rahu is a demon who is all head and no body, he's just got a little tail apparently, this great big head that swallows up the moon, even the sun on occasions. So when the moon becomes free from the eclipse it breaks free from the jaws of Rahu. So this is a very common simile in the Pali texts, breaking free from the jaws of Rahu.) So to those who are free from passion, to those who are completely balanced, who have won freedom just like the moon freeing itself from the jaws of Rahu, to such people, or upon such a person, should you bestow your offering. They are worthy of that. Sometimes you get the image of freeing oneself from impurities, freeing oneself from unskilful thoughts, just like the moon freeing itself from the clouds. That image comes in the *Dhammapada*.

Chintamani: Can we just go back to "*vitaraga*". I was just going [193] to write down this definition for it. I was going to say is passion dependent on an outside source for its stimulation?

S: Yes, if by stimulation one means a sort of, just a reaction, it's dependent, yes. So the verse is saying, as it were, that in a sense there must be passion, in the Tantric sense. There must be energy. But the energies must all be in a sense of balance, on ever higher and higher levels, must all be working in the same direction. So do you see something of the nature of the ideal, which emerges from this verse? In other words, energies should be in a state of balance, not in a state of imbalance. If your energies are completely balanced on ever higher and higher

levels, then this is a state of freedom, liberation, or Enlightenment itself. And the unbalanced energy is the energy that circles round and round in the samsara, you know, round and round on the wheel of life, going from one extreme to the other. But the balanced energy is the energy that gradually moves up the spiral in the direction of nirvana, or in the direction of Enlightenment.

Ratnapani: Should one expect a temporary balance? I suppose, to begin with, I mean, it's not going to be... you're not going to have the five spiritual faculties balanced with great power until there's sufficient insight.

S: Right, yes.

Ratnapani: And then that would be Enlightenment anyway. So I suppose we set our own temporary balances on the way, as it were.

S: Or there's no sort of permanent balance until there's some definite measure of insight. But even then that insight has to be developed more and more, and of course the faculties grouped, as it were, around it and developed around it, and brought more and more into harmony around it. That provides a sort of centre, even though that centre itself is, as it were, travelling upwards the whole time, carrying its faculties with it.

Voice: What does this mean when it says "timely on them let brahman seeking merit"?

S: Don't forget that the whole point of departure of the discussion is that the brahmin is looking for someone to whom to [194] offer his oblation. So the Buddha is saying, well if you're looking for someone worthy, find someone truly worthy. And who is the truly worthy person? It's the Enlightened person. And what is the Enlightened person like? He's like this. And he gives a description in this whole series of verses. Although, of course, you'll find at the end of the sutta the Buddha saying forget all about the sacrificial offering, make the true offering, the real offering, the offering of your own faith and devotion, the offering of yourself. So verse by verse he gives a description of this ideal man who really deserves the brahmin's offering. But, you know, to whom or for whom or in relation to whom, ultimately, that sort of offering is completely irrelevant, as he eventually makes clear. Let's go on, let's read the next verse then.

(466) Those unattached who wayfare in the world,
The ever mindful, quit of thoughts of 'mine':
Timely on them let brahman seeking merit
In sacrifice his offering bestow.

S: Yes. This is a quite literal translation. "Those unattached who wayfare in the world". This "being unattached" is this. Do you feel a very sort of positive spiritual ideal, not to be attached to anything? I mean, we often encounter this word, it often crops up in Buddhist text and other spiritual literature. So here the ideal man is said to be one who fares unattached in the world, who walks unattached in the world, who lives unattached in the world. So what does one mean exactly by being unattached, and is this a very positive way of looking at the spiritual life, as a life of non-attachment? What do you think, what do you feel about this?

Two voices: It's not dependent.

S: Great minds think alike! It's not dependent. What does one mean by dependent?

Voice: I don't know if you've said this but it's important to have a mind that doesn't stick.

S: I mean there is such a thing as objective dependence. You depend on food to sustain life. That's all right, that's acceptable. But there's an unskilful dependence, which is sort of neurotic emotional dependence, and you can depend on food in this way; not [195] to sustain life but to get from food some emotional satisfaction that you either ought to be getting

elsewhere or not to be wanting at all. So that is an unhealthy dependence. So one can be objectively healthily dependent and one can also be subjectively unhealthily dependent, and it's the latter that one has to eschew. But do you think that this is a very positive way of putting things, that one should be unattached or non-attached? I mean do all strive to be unattached or non-attached?

Ratnapani: I look at it from two ways. From the top, the idea of someone who is unattached is rather... it's pleasant, it's clean, pure. But as a working practice it doesn't inspire me very much. I'd rather think in terms of putting myself into, or becoming, attached to the useful, the good.

S: Ah right. This reminds me of something that used to be said by this yogi friend of mine in Bombay. [This was Dr Mehta, tr.] He was a very unconventional character in many ways, and thought for himself. And one day he said to me, many years ago in Bombay, he said, "All this talk about non-attachment, non-attachment, detachment, detachment", he said, "it's all wrong. They've got it all the wrong way round. One should think in terms of attachment, attach yourself to the good, attach yourself to the skilful. Not always talking in negative terms of becoming unattached or detaching yourself." He said, "let people attach themselves, but to the right things." So I thought at the time that there's quite a lot in that, and this is virtually what you are saying, is it? That think in terms of attaching to the positive rather than being unattached to or detached from the negative. This is what I was getting at when I was asking whether you think this is a very positive and helpful way of putting things. So to live in the world unattached means to live in the world attached to skilful things, yes? Being attached - metaphorically speaking - to faith and devotion, being attached to skilful thoughts, being attached to meditation. Of course some people will say, some clever worldly people, well what's the good of giving up your attachment to worldly things if you only become attached to spiritual things? What would be your reply to that?

Ratnapani: It's a means to an end, which is complete detachment from everything - the only means.[196]

S: And after all you're only using the word attachment in this way metaphorically. You'll sort out any unskilful element in it as you go along.

Voice: And yes, another thing is that I'm not stupid. I'm not going to blunder from one to the other like that.

S: Right. You can't be attached to meditation in the same way that you're attached to food, quite, can you?

Voices: (laughter) No.

S: What is meditation? It's a higher state of consciousness. The fact that you're enjoying it all means that it will be having a purifying effect upon you. It'll be purifying your wrong motive for attaining even, or any wrongness in your motive for attaining it. So if you remain in meditation long enough you will cease to be attached to meditation, because that's the nature of meditation. If you're too much attached to your meditation in an unskilful way you will soon cease to meditate, and then you'll have to ask yourself, well, why couldn't I carry on with my meditation? Well I was too attached to it in the wrong sort of way. All right, but then you learn. So in this way the meditation experience itself purifies your attachment to the meditation experience, in the long run anyway.

Prakasha: This brahmin was attached to religious observances.

S: Indeed he was, yes. Well he says he delighted in making offerings, he said that he got great satisfaction out of it. So to live in the world free from attachment really means to live in the world attached to the right things, to positive things. And it's "sada sata", those who are ever mindful. That's quite clear and straightforward isn't it? To be ever mindful. But so difficult.

Do you think it's literally possible to be mindful all the time? And what does it mean to be mindful all the time? Do you try to be mindful all the time?

Voice: I aim to be mindful.

Devamitra: You can't be mindful when you're asleep.[197]

S: You can be, you can be aware in sleep. You can be aware of dreams and even aware that you are dreaming. There is even a yoga of directing your dreams, so that you dream the dreams you want to dream. Have you ever had this experience of controlling your dream where you want it to go? So in this kind of yoga you dream yourself into an ever more and more positive situation, so that you wake up feeling really happy. You dream yourself into, well, into Sukhavati you could say, eventually. I mean THE Sukhavati, not our little one, not our little reflex on earth. Dreams are very vivid aren't they? If you have a very happy dream you wake up in a very positive, refreshed, peaceful state of mind don't you? So it is quite important even to be able to extend your awareness into sleep, into the dream state, and eventually even direct your dreams, shape your dreams, create your dreams. Dream the right things, dream the right dreams and that way you'll wake up happy and positive and that'll help you. You could even get into a meditative state in dreams. You can even have insight experiences in dreams. You can even receive teachings in dreams or teach in dreams. We mustn't attach too much importance to the waking state. You can be very busy while asleep.

Devamitra: But I was just thinking that there's supposed to be a period in your sleep where you don't dream, in fact.

S: Yes, yes.

Devamitra: There does seem to be a complete blacking out of awareness actually. I mean, maybe not. This is just what I tend to believe.

S: Well, there is certainly a blocking out, as it were, of dualistic awareness. That is to say even in the dream state there is a distinction of subject and object. You, the dreamer, and the dream, or the dream world. But in deep sleep there is no such distinction, so from the standpoint of the subject-object duality there's nothing. But is there really nothing? Some schools maintain, some traditions maintain, that the state of deep sleep is a state of experience of self-luminosity, without distinction of subject and object, but still veiled as it were with a thin transparent veil of ignorance. And it is said that this is why you find deep sleep so refreshing. Because you have that dip, as it were, into at least a somewhat, if one can use that sort of expression, [198] a somewhat non-dualistic state. At least you've been relieved for a while from this burden of duality between subject and object, not in the sense of it being wiped out, but you're in a positive state of being, you're very much alive, a positive state of being where you don't experience subject and object. And this is why they say - this is an Upanishadic and Hindu tradition - this is why you experience deep sleep as so refreshing, and why they say there is an analogy between deep sleep and the experience of Enlightenment itself.

(end of side one)

Devamitra: But there is no real remembrance of it. I mean...

S: Well how can there be remembrance in a way because who or what remembers?

Devamitra: I'm just thinking in terms of mindfulness, and mindfulness of recollection.

S: Well you can't be mindful with regard to that, because the mindful self, I mean, is swallowed up in that sort of state, in that sort of experience. There is nothing for you to be aware of or to recollect because you haven't experienced it in that way. That is to say in terms of the subject-object duality to begin with anyway. How can you recollect dualistically that

which you've not experienced dualistically? That's why you don't remember gaining Enlightenment. How can you remember gaining Enlightenment? You can't remember gaining Enlightenment. But that's why the experience, as it were, has to recreate itself from instant to instant. You don't remember the past Enlightenment, you've only got the present Enlightenment. There's no past Enlightenment, and even if there was you couldn't know it. You couldn't remember it could you?

Voices: Laughter.

S: Well maybe we had better leave that there. This is just to sort of point out the possibility of extending mindfulness and awareness in directions that we don't normally think of extending them, for example the dream state, especially the dream state. So it is possible to be more mindful than we think it's possible to be? You can be mindful during your sleep as well as mindful during the waking state. What we have to be careful of is not to try and practise mindfulness in a sort of almost mechanical, [199] alienated way, standing aside from our experience - this is very important - but that the mindfulness should be in and with the experience, not split off from it and standing outside it. Do you know what I mean? It must be an integral awareness, as I call it, not an alienated awareness. So, "The ever mindful, quit of thoughts of 'mine'," - having given up thoughts of mine. Do you think this is really possible? What is meant by giving up thoughts of mine, or is there any other way of putting it?

Voice: Can you just transcend yourself so [that] you're so involved in what you're doing or what you're involved with that you don't think of yourself?

Voice: Could it be going back to non-attachment, not being attached?

S: Yes, because it's referring really to a sense of ownership, that this is mine. And this is something very deep rooted and obviously closely connected with the sense of I and me: this is "mine". So if you have no sense of mine, you've really gone quite a long way on the path. I mean there are quite gross objects with regard to which you can feel that these are mine. The ones usually mentioned in Pali texts are wealth, in the sense of property and personal belongings, and sons. In the Dhammapada "Putta m'atthi dhanam m'atthi iti balo vihannati.". "This wealth is mine, these sons are mine. Thus the fool torments himself." Thus the spiritually mature person torments himself. But then you can come on to a subtler sense of ownership, like my reputation, my idea.

Voice: My gifts.

S: My gifts.

Voice: My God.

S: My God, yes. So if someone has less and less sense of ownership, has less and less the attitude towards things that "these are mine", then this is a sure sign that the ego sense is weakened. But do you think there is another way of looking at it rather than ceasing to think of things as "mine"?[200]

Ratnapani: Natural generosity.

S: Yes, there's natural generosity. There's also thinking of people as mine, not only my sons, but my wife or my family, my tribe, my group, my nation.

Voice: The very language that we have got insists that we say that. My family, you can't say the family.

S: Well you do say the wife don't you? I wonder why that is? (laughter)

Voice: Archetypal figure.

S: The wife, yes, the wife. Not just a wife, my particular one, the wife.

Voice: Maybe you want to disclaim any...

S: Maybe, yes. (laughter) Maybe yes. But there's another way of approaching it. There is, you may remember, the Tantric figure - or rather maybe I should say the Mahayana-cum-Vajrayana figure - Mamaki. Do you remember? Mamaki is, as it were, the consort of the Buddha Ratnasambhava. Do you remember that? You remember the five Buddhas, the five Buddhas of the mandala, the Buddha mandala? So the Buddha Ratnasambhava is the jewel-born Buddha. He's the yellow Buddha of the south, and his, as it were, consort, is Mamaki. Mamaki means "one who makes everything mine". So you should either make nothing mine or everything mine. So when you make everything mine what really is your attitude?

Voice: No distinction.

S: No distinction, no discrimination. Everything is equally yours. So you don't need to bother about having anything - it's yours anyway, even if somebody else has it as well, it's his. If it passes from your hand to his hand, what does it matter? It's all yours. You'd feel that even when it's with him, it's yours. So why not let him have it? When he's got it, it's just as much yours as when you have it. (laughter)[201]

It's like when Milarepa was offered some gold by a maiden, he said, "I don't need this gold, to me everything is gold. The whole world is gold." So it's rather like that. The whole world is mine, I don't need to take anything. It's mine, why should I bother? It all belongs to me. You're like a very rich man going around his estate. He sees all the apples falling: he doesn't bother to pick them up and put them into his pocket, they're all his anyway. But someone who just hops over the wall sees all those apples lying around and they are not his, so he quickly picks up a few, stuffs them into his pocket and back over the wall again, because they're not his. If you feel that they are yours, or if in fact they are yours, you don't need to bother to pick them because they're yours. You can, as it were, have them any time you like. So you can either have the attitude of, "nothing is mine" or "everything is mine". Either the attitude of "I have no self" or universalize yourself. (laughter)

Voice: It could get you into a lot of trouble. You could get yourself into a lot of trouble if you go around thinking everything is yours and you pick up apples from somebody else's...

S: But if you really think that everything is yours, you wouldn't bother to pick it up because it would just be as much yours lying where it was. (laughter)

Voice: What if you needed it, if you were hungry?

S: Well you would be quite free to pick it up. But then you'd accept that the social system was such that you couldn't do that and you'd be quite happy going to jail because the jail is also yours. That also belongs to you. (laughter) The warders belong to you. Everything in this prison belongs to you, why should you bother. It's just like being at home. So you'd accept all those vicissitudes quite happily. (laughter) Anyway who is doing it to you? And you'd think "I'm doing it all to myself. It's just a big joke." (laughter) But your state of mind wouldn't be affected, which is the main point here. So having given up thoughts of mine, or having [202] given up "mineness", which means in Tantric terms regarding everything as one's own, one can have this attitude towards people also. Instead of regarding just this particular son as yours, or this particular woman as yours, or this particular friend as yours, just think that everyone belongs to you.

Ratnapani: Particularly good for the desirable but unattainable woman, she's mine so you can stop worrying about her.

S: Yes indeed. Not only is she, they're all yours, every single one of them past, present, future,

black, white, pink, and yellow. (laughter) They're all yours, what is there to worry about?

Voice: (laughter) ...pick any of them out.

Voice: But that also suggests that you care for them.

S: Yes, it does. But if you really had the sense that it does really belong to me, you won't bother to take it, because usually you take things in a neurotic way, just to fill the inner emptiness. You feel you're empty: you haven't this and therefore you have got to take it to fill that inner emptiness. But if you feel you've got it, you don't feel any inner emptiness. You're full, why should you bother to take? You can let it alone. For instance we go for a walk in the country, you see some beautiful flowers, you want to pick them. Now why? Why can't you leave them growing where they are? If you want to offer them to the Buddha - all right we'll let that pass, you want them for you shrine, OK, that's an expression of devotion, they're better in the shrine in front of the Buddha. But apart from that, suppose you just want to pick them? You can't just leave them growing there. Why is that? Why can't you be happy just thinking that flowers are growing there? Blooming there? Why do you have to pick them?

Voice: You attach them to yourself.

S: Yes, right. D. H. Lawrence writes something about this doesn't he? [Possibly a reference to the passage Bhante quotes in *The Religion of Art*, which is referenced as *Selected Essays* (Penguin, 1950), pp.118-9, tr.]

Voice: (unclear) of the experience of a flower while looking at it. It doesn't quite register.[203]

S: Yes, quite. It's just something to pick, something to pluck and take home. I used to see this as a child. I remember my father was very sensitive to this. We used to see in the summertime droves and droves of cyclists, cycling back to London from Kingston-on-Thames. And every one of them, on the back of his bike, had an enormous bundle of bluebells with long, white roots. My father used to point these out to me and say, "Look, they've pulled them out by the roots which means" (I don't know whether this is correct) "the bulbs won't sprout again". You have to cut, whereas if you pulled them up, you destroy the bulb, and you've got all these thousands of bluebells being destroyed. So I remember having this impressed on me as quite a small boy by my father. I remember seeing these hundreds of cyclists, all with their great fat bunch - or bundle in fact - of bluebells on the back of the bike. All with these long, white roots dangling. So many destroyed bluebells, and the time they got home most of them would be dead anyway.

Ratnapani: They only last a couple of hours.

S: Yes. So why? Why does one do this?

Voice: I was thinking also of people who go out into the country and shoot rabbits and shoot pigeons and stuff for sport.

Chintamani: The main thing about things like that, I mean, a dead flower from that point of view is very unattractive, but it's supremely attractive while living because it is alive. That's the best thing about it, and so is an animal. So if you feel permanently dead inside, then you try and suck in as much life and energy as you can.

S: There were several articles in the papers recently about the shooting of small songbirds in Italy.

Voices: Oh yes.

S: Apparently the Italians are absolutely murderous in this respect. Every young Italian who

can afford a gun buys a gun and shoots off at all the songbirds within range. And millions of migrant birds are killed in this way. Now why is this? Why do people do this? They seem particularly bad at this sort of thing in Italy. I've suspicions that it's connected with some very false [204] kind of masculine image.

Voice: I think it's that they're a bit cut off from the country. They go to the country with some sort of mission to shoot.

S: But why do you have to shoot when you go? Why can't you just sit under the trees and listen to the birds singing? Why do you want to bang away at them all the time? Those little songbirds, you can't even eat them, although I'm afraid they do eat them on the continent sometimes. But it's one of the things that really horrified me the first time I went to Europe, which was about ten years ago. I went to France and just happened to be looking around a market and all these little songbirds, all plucked, little tiny birds like that, rows and rows of them for sale in the market. And some of them potted, not only just plucked, but preserved in little jars like cherries. Really terrible - this really shocked me at the time.

Voice: It's almost like jealousy, jealousy of the bird. Because it's so free... (unclear)

S: Maybe there's something of that sort in it.

Voice: Something to do with power, the idea of being able to shoot something.

S: You're shooting these small defenceless things.

Voice: Yes, right.

S: Apparently some of these wretched Italian sportsmen have got special shooting costumes, shooting coats and shooting caps. They dress up and go off as it were for a weekend of shooting, shooting these little songbirds. There's nothing brave about it, nothing heroic about it. It's not like they're going off and shooting a tiger or an elephant. They're shooting little songbirds. So what does this tell you about the Italian male, the Italian man? What does it tell you about Italian life or civilization or culture? They're very proud of their culture. They've got all those old churches and thousands of oil paintings. There's lots of culture all over the place. You trip over culture in Italy. But people go [205] round shooting these little birds. So in a sense where is the culture, as far as those people are concerned, anyway?

Voice: It's past.

S: Anyway that was a little diatribe. Let's get back to what the Buddha says. Next verse.

(467) He who is pleasure-quit, as conqueror fares,
Hath found and known the end of birth-and-death,
Cool man, cool as the waters of a lake,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come!

S: So you've heard the description of the man who is really worthy of the offering. "Yo kame hitva abhibhuyyacari" which Hare translates "he who is pleasure-quit, as conqueror fares". It's quite literal. He who is done with pleasures. Here we have to be quite careful, too, in negating this idea of pleasure. Do you think one can make a distinction between pleasure and happiness, and say that happiness is positive whereas pleasure is negative? Or can one even say that pleasure is positive, in a sense?

Voice: I think pleasure is, because (unclear) where there's pleasure but not happiness.

S: Hmm, yes, right. Sukha is more like happiness. But where is the danger in pleasure? Why are all the texts - certainly all the Buddhist texts - so much down on pleasure?

Voice: As a distraction, because it can be used as a distraction.

Voice: Or as pursuing it as an end in itself.

S: Pursuing it as an end in itself. But why does one pursue it as an end in itself?

Voice: You try to own it.

S: But why does one try to own it?

Voice: The same reason as you said before, with the plant - trying to fill the gaps.[206]

S: Trying to fill the inner emptiness. So if you are a healthy positive person leading a healthy, positive life with a definite object in view, definitely trying to develop yourself, then there's nothing wrong for you in a little mindful pleasure. It sometimes keeps you, as it were, toned up. The danger is that you become neurotically attached to the pleasure and dependent upon it, and it eventually diverts you. So I think there must be some - at least initial - place for pleasure in the spiritual life, in the sense of pleasurable bodily and mental sensations. I think here contact with nature is very useful and very important. When I say pleasurable bodily and mental sensations, I'm thinking of things like experience of the sunlight and blue sky and the smell of the earth or the sight of the trees. These can be very satisfying and very pleasurable in a healthy and positive way. So the experience of water when you swim... I mean usually when people speak of pleasure they either think of getting drunk or think of sex, these cruder forms which are often not even pleasurable. But I'm thinking more in terms of direct contact with the elements, with the earth, or with water, with fire - that would be the sunlight - with air. I think this is very important in the spiritual life. It does keep you a bit toned up, a bit zestful, a bit alive, in the ordinary sense, otherwise you can go dull and dry and sluggish.

Voice: What about attachment to these things? Sometimes I've thought that maybe I'm enjoying these things a bit too much. Perhaps I didn't...

S: Well, I say that supposing you started feeling, well, these things are so pleasant, I just don't want to go back to London. I'm just going to stay here all the time, enjoy the sunshine, enjoy the fresh air. I don't care what happens to the work. Then that means attachment is creeping in. But when you enjoy them when they are offered, when they present themselves, according to circumstances, you take them freely and enjoy them. But when the time for relinquishing them arrives, well you just relinquish them quite happily and go back to what you have to do. This is quite a healthy attitude. You haven't become attached.

Devamitra: I think we were talking about this sort of thing once before, when somebody quotes you as saying that one could be erotic with nature.[207]

S: Ah yes, in a manner of speaking. What does erotic suggest or imply? Intense pleasurable sensation. So you can have this intense pleasurable sensation, bodily calm, mental ... when you are in contact with nature, even with rocks and stones, if not to speak of trees and flowers, and earth and sky. And I think a lot of our eroticism gets unloaded and overloaded onto sex because of our lack of contact with nature. I've noticed this in India, in the case of people who live in villages, they're in constant contact with nature, there isn't this constant pressure on sexual eroticism. Your eroticism is distributed more over nature as a whole.

Devamitra: What do you mean by eroticism, just the feelings for the stimulative part?

S: Yes, the feeling of bodily and mental pleasure and a certain relaxation, and satisfaction.

Voice: I used to feel sort of like communion with the countryside was a form of self-indulgence.

S: Yes, that's just a Christian hangover you can say, that you're not enjoying yourself. Sure

there can be positive indulgence, if we have to use that term. What is indulge?

Ratnapani: I don't like that word at all.

S: Some people even say things like, "I think I'll indulge in a bit of meditation." (laughter) That sounds awful. Well, "indulgent" ... maybe "indulgent" we shouldn't use at all, because it suggests perhaps that you just allow yourself to enjoy something out of weakness. And you ought not to be enjoying it, and enjoyment is wicked or sinful. Indulge - it's a really ominous sort of word. Tells you quite a lot about the history of this culture, and Europe in general.

Voice: Indulgence sounds a bit like just overdoing it.

S: It's also to do with permission. Indulgence is permitting you to sin on payment of a certain fee, or you sin first and pay afterwards. (laughter) Occasionally I believe you could pay first [208] and sin afterwards, just to make sure, and this was called an indulgence. Then the word was derived from there. Really it's permission to sin. So you're allowing yourself to sin, you're just letting go for a bit. But that's a very negative attitude towards healthy positive enjoyment. This is where sports and games come in as well, especially open air sports, sports that involve contact with nature. They have quite a healthy positive effect and I've certainly observed in the case of those people who do have some place and time in their life for sport and things of that sort that involve contact with nature, especially things like swimming, you know, when you're in contact with the water and with sunlight. They're not so much bothered with their sexual drive and urges. Not that they're less sexed than other people, but there's no neurotic overloading of the erotic feelings onto that particular area. Their eroticism is spread out a little over mother nature in general. Maybe I shouldn't say mother nature - nature in general. (laughter) City people, of course, obviously tend to be cut off from nature.

Voice: Presumably this is one of the reasons (unclear).

S: I think so, you're never very far from nature there, even in the city. They're garden cities, they're laid out more, there's plenty of space. You've got a big garden, a big compound, lots of trees, lots of bushes, lots of flowers. For instance when we went to see Aksobhya in the house that he was living in there. He is right on the edge of the bay, you can see the blue water in the distance. They had great hedges of hibiscus flower in his garden all growing all the way round. Big red flowers, you're right in the midst of nature. So this is quite important. So I think we must be quite cautious in thinking of the spiritual life in terms of giving up pleasure as a sort of blanket statement. Or that pleasure should be given up.

Voice: Presumably the Buddha enjoyed (unclear).

S: Yes, there are little hints and indications, and also shortly before he died he said to Ananda, wandering near Vaisali, beautiful is such and such grove and beautiful is [209] such and such ?jetta [Perhaps Bhante means "vana". See PTS Dictionary. Jetavana (Jeta's park/forest) was nowhere near Vaisali, tr.]. He seemed to have appreciated the natural beauty of the area. And in the songs of the brethren, the so-called Theragatha, there are many appreciations of the beauty of nature, and how the monks meditating enjoyed the sound of the rain falling and the contrast between the white plumage of the crane and the dark raincloud past which, or in front of which, it was flying. All these little touches.

So if one is to speak in terms of quitting or giving up pleasure, what sort of pleasure do you think absolutely ought to be given up?

Voice: Those that can't conduce.

Voice: Neurotic.

S: Those which are neurotic, which means compulsive and repetitive, and which you use to try and feed the inner emptiness. Maybe one should put it this way. You're safe only if you

enjoy a pleasure when you are happy. If you feel unhappy and you go seeking out the pleasure because you are feeling unhappy, to give yourself a pleasurable sensation and make you feel all right, that is very dangerous indeed. There's also the point, though, that if you are feeling happy you will not go in search of pleasure because you've no reason to. If it happens to come along, you will enjoy it, if it doesn't happen to come along you won't bother. Well even if it comes along and you're feeling very happy, you think it may not be very skilful to enjoy that pleasure, then you won't enjoy it, you'll just not enjoy it, quite happily. For instance take the question of food. Suppose you feel in a very happy state of mind. Well you won't start thinking of cream buns and chocolate eclairs and things like that. (laughter) You'd be too, you're just so happy in yourself that you don't go seeking after those sorts of pleasurable sensations. So supposing, still happy, you come in for the meal because the bell rings. All right, you'll eat and you'll enjoy your food, but you'll eat just as much as you need and then stop. And even though there's some extra course, which is very attractive and very tasty, if you don't really need it you won't bother, you'll leave it. And this is the attitude of the happy person towards pleasures. But even the happy person has to be very mindful, in the case of pleasures.[210]

Ratnapani: I believe you once said something to the effect that unless you are mindful while enjoying something, you're not really enjoying it.

S: There's that too. Because you can sometimes see that the person who is neurotically craving for something is so desperate that even when he gets it he can't enjoy it. To really enjoy a pleasure, pleasure must be added to your existing happiness. If it's meant to fill up the gap of your existing unhappiness, it will never be able to do that. You'll have at the very most a sort of fleeting, dismal, alienated pleasurable feeling, which will leave you just as empty and hungry as before. So only the happy person really can enjoy a pleasure, I would say. He's not desperate for it, he doesn't mind particularly not having it, so he can, as it were, savour it and relish it and turn it over on his tongue, and enjoy it, which the neurotic person who needs it can't possibly do.

Voice: Because he's sort of escaping into it, into the thing. He's not really there.

S: Yes, right.

Voice: It just shows how unhappy society must be. So much time and money into the pursuit of so-called pleasure.

S: Does a happy person watch TV? Does a happy person go to bingo? Does a happy person go to the races?

Ratnapani: Any one of them once in a blue moon, perhaps.

S: But I mean if you go to the Soho area of London, if you just look at the people who are prowling around late at night in search of pleasure. Do they look happy? Even after having the pleasure, do they look happy?

Voice: They often look worse.

S: Right, yes. So if you are feeling happy, you can afford to allow yourself to enjoy pleasures mindfully and skilfully. Sometimes you may have to not enjoy them even, seeing that it's [211] either unskilful or could be unskilful in the future, or might lead to unskilfulness. So then you say no. But you won't mind saying no because you go on being happy within yourself.

Voice: And then gradually less and less produces more and more pleasure, presumably.

S: Yes, there's that too. Whereas in the case of neurotic indulgence more and more produces less and less, as is well known in the case of alcohol. When you really enjoy your wine,

happily enjoy it, you don't overindulge, you just take a very little, just roll it around your tongue, really savour it. Even a few drops might be enough for the real connoisseur. There are such things of course, you know, as neurotic connoisseurs, who get their neurotic kick out of the exquisiteness of the sensations, and the fact that it's a very rare wine and laid down at the time of Napoleon, and all that kind of thing.

So, "he who is pleasure-quit, as conqueror fares". This idea of a conqueror - the Buddha is referred to as the conqueror - the word that is used here is not the same word, it's a different word, but the Buddha is referred to as conqueror, as jina. Have you come across this epithet before? The Buddha as jina? It's not one we often use in referring to the Buddha. I mentioned yesterday in the Pali there are all sorts of epithets and titles for the Buddha that we just never use at all. We always say the Buddha, but in Pali, as I pointed out, you get various epithets including this one, the jina, the conqueror. What we call the five dhyani Buddhas are in fact in Buddhist texts called the five jinas, the five conquerors.

Voice: It would be good to use some of that terminology.

S: It would indeed, with a capital C. So why is the Buddha called the conqueror?

Voice: It's easy to relate to, maybe?

S: I meant in the sense of what has he conquered.

Voice: Mara.[212]

S: Mara. Yes he's conquered Mara. He's conquered the whole of conditioned existence. I mean he's like a victorious king, he's the Dharmaraja, the king of the Dharma, who has conquered the forces of evil. So you get a lot of this sort of terminology in Buddhism. You get it as when, "beating the drum of the Dharma". And Sariputta, what we call the chief of the disciples, is called the senapati, the Dharma senapati, which means the commander-in-chief of the Dharma. Some of our friends may not like this military terminology but there it is in the Pali canon. The Buddha is the Dharmaraja, the king of the Dharma, and Sariputta is his commander-in-chief. And the Buddha even says in a passage, he says, addressing all the bhikkhus, "we are all kshatriyas, we are all warriors, and for what do we fight? We fight for ethics, for meditation, for wisdom and for liberation." [untraced, tr.] So "we are warriors" he said, or "you are warriors, bhikkhus." So it's a very strenuous and heroic ideal. So the Buddha is called jina, the conqueror. But do you think there's any reason for connecting the two, being quit of pleasures and being a conqueror?

Devamitra: He conquers the cravings which lead to hankering after pleasures.

S: Right, it's a contrast between slavery and freedom: the person who is conquered by Mara and Mara's daughters, and the person who has conquered Mara and Mara's daughters, and his sons too for that matter, the sons being anger and arrogance and pride and conceit and so on. So the person who is devoted to pleasures is enslaved by Mara. This whole question of pleasure is very important because our natural tendency, unconsciously, is to go where pleasure is. This is why it is so dangerous, though in a way in itself quite healthy, to go where pleasure is. And we're unconsciously motivated by this much of the time.

Ratnapani: I've noticed also in memory some things that were pleasurable, things that one remembers as being pleasurable, have set up a pattern of pleasure-seeking. And you can even take a time to realize that that isn't pleasure, perhaps never was, but certainly isn't now. Still going that way, still heading in that direction in slack moments.[213]

Voice: London has got a kind of an aura of seeking pleasure, but never actually being satisfied.

S: Especially central London you mean. You experience it in the shops. I remember when I

was in retreat, or during a period that I was in retreat in Cornwall, I had a quite horrific experience, in a way. I think it was after some months. Vajrakumara and I had to drive into Plymouth and do some shopping, and we found ourselves in the course of the afternoon in the middle of a very big department store. I think I've mentioned this in a lecture, you might have heard it before. We were in the food section. Now there were these vast, long counters with all sorts of food, it was like a sort of super Woolworths. It was some other firm, not Woolworths but something like that, but bigger and better. And there was this vast department with counter after counter of foodstuffs. And at intervals of about four or five yards all the way along there was an elderly rather decrepit, rusty looking woman just hovering for all the world like a preta. And there were several dozen of these elderly women just hovering round these counters, round the cheese, round the chocolates, round the tinned stuff. And there was the most weird atmosphere in this whole department store, especially in this particular department, of sort of sluggish craving. It wasn't anything active or vigorous, it was just sluggish, dull, as I called it in my lecture ["Enlightenment as Experience and as Non-experience", tr.], I think, reptilian greed. (laughter) And you knew. You saw this reptilian greed looking out of their glazed eyes. So we felt so uneasy and so uncomfortable we just got straight out of that place as soon as we could. It was a very weird experience indeed, coming, you know, after we had been in our cliff-top eyrie for several months, and just coming into Plymouth, and into that place. So this is very much the atmosphere of the city. I notice that in all big stores frankly, in all the Sainsbury's you get a touch of this atmosphere, and in the Tescos and so on, because people's greed is being stimulated. It's not that they need that food - most of the food is rubbish anyway - but it's a substitute for something, they've a sort of hankering which they try to fulfil. If you go in on a Friday evening and you queue up behind the people with these vast trolleys containing all sorts of rubbish, assorted rubbish, (laughter) the whole sort of feeling and atmosphere is simply terrible. And then as you are on your way out, the last temptation on the left, [214/215] all the choc-bars and the Maltesers. And you see people turning their head slowly and there's a sort of dull glazed expression comes into their eyes and very slowly a hand goes out. (laughter) And they grab a big bar of chocolate, or a big bag of something or other that goes into the basket, for all the world like a sort of lizard or snake gulping down a frog. (laughter) This is what it reminds one of, this is the atmosphere of cities.

Voice: And you can catch it.

S: It's not a healthy appetite. It's this dull, sluggish, almost stagnant, marsh-like greed.

Devamitra: Would you say that, as a measure of self protection, one should even totally avoid that kind of store?

S: I think one should.

Devamitra: Completely?

S: Well, depending upon one's own strength or weakness. I try to avoid them, I can't always do it, but I feel more and more like avoiding.

Voice: I became aware of it after you mentioned it.

S: It's much better to buy at the little corner shop, if there is a little corner shop. In Brighton, for instance, in George Street, where the Centre is, they've got several nice little shops in that same street. Including grocer's shops, but there's a plan apparently to pull them all down and put in a supermarket. And of course there's a bit of resistance to it. Whether that resistance will succeed we don't know, but that is the plan: to have a supermarket there instead of these homely little shops, which are much better, where you don't get that kind of atmosphere, I think. Occasionally you get a touch of it, but it's nothing compared with what you get in the supermarkets and the big stores. If you go to the West End, if you go down Oxford Street and Regents Street, again there's a very strange atmosphere, it's different but still a bit weird. There's wealth and greed. So there's much of this sort of thing in the city.[216]

Chintamani: Consequently a lot of waste as well.

S: A lot of waste - a lot of waste of energy.

Devamitra: I must say I think you get a similar kind of atmosphere in health food shops, though, with the sort of cranky health fads that people go in for.

S: Because it's often well-to-do people who patronize them, well you have to be well to-do-to patronize them to any extent. It has become rather a racket I think.

Ratnapani: I find them worse, something even more intensely neurotic, more finicky about the greed.

S: Yes. Anyway that's not a very pleasant subject, so let's leave it. So

He who is pleasure-quit, as conqueror fares,
Hath found and known the end of birth-and-death,

In other words he's off the wheel of life. There is no craving creating karma and causing him to be reborn again and again.

Cool man, cool as the waters of a lake.

Voice: What is the word for "cool"?

S: Well, "parinibbuto", it's not really cool, it's "supremely extinguished". All passion is spent. That's what we were talking about yesterday. He has attained nirvana - to change the verb into a noun. The fires of craving, hatred, and delusion are well extinguished, but that of course does not mean that nothing is left: that's the nihilistic extreme. There's no conditioned something, but there is not a complete non-existence of everything.

Prakasha: Very much like a cool cave.

S: Like a cool cave, yes. So he's parinibbuto, extinct, as it were. Udakarahado va sito - cool. Cool as the waters of a lake. He's extinct in the sense of having extinguished the threefold fire of craving, hatred, and delusion. He's extinct in respect of these three unskilled roots. He has become cool, just like the waters of a lake. This word "sito" becomes of "sita-bhava". [It] occurs quite often in Pali texts and it [217] signifies the sort of waning of the fires of passion, becoming cool; and especially in a hot country to be cool is clearly a positive sort of thing. So

(467) He who is pleasure-quit, as conqueror fares,
Hath found and known the end of birth-and-death.
Cool man (or extinct man), cool as the waters of a lake,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come!

You notice the change in the last line? From now onward the refrain as it were changes. So far you've had "in sacrifice his offering bestow"; now you have "oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come". In other words the Buddha is really getting into his stride, he's openly proclaiming his own ideal and using his own distinctive word, which is Tathagata - another word for the Buddha. By the way, all these terms were applied to disciples too, though in course of time they come to be restricted more and more to the Buddha himself.

Devamitra: "Tathagata" is Man-thus-come?

S: Well this is how Hare translates it, but what does Tathagata mean? Depending on how you derive the word and analyse it grammatically, it can mean one who has thus come or one who has thus gone. Usually it's explained as thus gone, in the sense of one who has gone thus, i.e. as his predecessors, the previous Buddhas. This is one explanation. Tatha-gata is thus gone;

Tatha-agata is thus come. But if you join the two words together, both make Tathagata. So it can mean either "thus come" or "thus gone", or both.

The Mahayanists explain it rather differently. They say, "gone through wisdom, come through compassion". Through his wisdom he realized nirvana, through his compassion he, as it were, came back from nirvana into the world to help others, though of course wisdom and compassion are one and inextinguishable, indistinguishable.

Chintamani: Gone through wisdom, come through compassion.

Devamitra: That's only in the Mahayana?

S: Yes. Tathata of course is also a very important word for the Mahayana. It's a synonym, as it were, a positive synonym, for sunyata, and it suggests the unique, indefinable, indescribable nature of reality. What can you say about reality? What can you say about the absolute? You can't say anything. It's just [218] like that. It's as it is. You can only speak about the thusness of things, you can't speak about the goodness, the badness, or anything like that, just the thusness. Things are thus, just like that. So you can get this term "thusness" or "suchness" whatever that is. It won't be defined, can't be described, can't be communicated in words or thoughts. So the Tathagata is one who has reached - realized - the indefinable, indescribable state and who at the same time mysteriously comes back from it, as it were, into the world. That is the Tathagata. This is the more Mahayana view, the more Mahayana interpretation. The Theravadins usually simply interpret it as "the one who has come thus" (i.e. to a state of nirvana) even as his predecessors the previous Buddhas came. That's their usual explanation. But "Tathagata" does appear repeatedly in the Pali text as a designation of the Buddha. So he's called the Arahant, he's called Bhaghavan, he's called Sattha which means teacher, he's called Jina which means conqueror, and again Tathagata. All those different titles and terms. And akijina, which means the man-of-naught. So "oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come". So it's the Tathagata who deserves the oblation. I mean, in other words the Tathagata, the Enlightened person, is the most worthy being of all. If any offering is to be made it should be to him. Any query on that verse?

He who is pleasure-quit as conqueror fares,
Hath found and known the end of birth-and-death
Cool man, cool as the waters of a lake,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come!

The Tathagata. All right, read the next verse then.

Peer with his peers, aloof from crooked men,
Of boundless wisdom is the Man-thus-come,
Unsoiled by anything of here or hence,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: Hmm. The translation is quite good actually. It's quite a difficult verse to translate. "Samo samehi" is literally "the same with the same", equal with those who are equal with him, or as Hare renders it, "peer with his peers", which is pretty good. There is a sort of gloss on this, which Chalmers incorporates in his translation, because Chalmers translates this as "to former Buddhas peer" - equal to the former Buddhas - but the text doesn't actually say that. Equal to his equals. "Aloof from crooked men", so what does this suggest [219] about the Tathagata? Leaving aside any possible reference to previous Buddhas. As a matter of fact, probably, at the time when the Sutta Nipata, or the suttas that make up the Sutta Nipata, or most of them at any rate, were compiled or composed, there was not very much said, if anything, about previous Buddhas. That seems to have come later, to have been a later development. So "peer with his peers, Aloof from crooked men". Just think about that while I look up crooked men, which is "visamehi". Hare translates crooked but it's actually uneven, or unequal, disharmonious, contrary. So what does this suggest? That the Tathagata, the Enlightened person, the real individual, has a natural tendency to associate with other real individuals, and

dissociate himself from those who are inharmonious, and not equal. You tend to associate with your equals, don't you? You tend to associate with those who are on the same level as you. So, it's as though even the Enlightened person has, as it were, this natural, which is, you could also say, this transcendental, tendency to associate with his equals, to associate with his peers and to avoid those who are unequal and inharmonious.

Chintamani: Although in the Buddha's case it is almost that he associates with his almost equals.

S: Yes and no, because the arahant disciples also are said to have experienced the same Enlightenment as the Buddha himself, even though not exercising the same historical function as the rediscoverer of the way. So surely the Buddha could have, as it were, equal communion, an equal communication with them. But of course his constant companion was Ananda who was not Enlightened in that way, in that sense, according to tradition, until after the Buddha's parinirvana. So even the Enlightened, it seems, according to this verse, have a tendency to associate with those who are somewhat like themselves. And to not exactly avoid those who are unlike themselves, but certainly not to associate with them in the way that they do or can associate with their equals. One finds this on a very much lower level, I mean one finds that Order members like to get together; Mitras like to get together. You're on the same level, as it were, and there may be quite a bit of overlapping, but at the same time you like to get together with your peers. There is a certain kind, a certain range, a certain type of communication possible among equals - or those who are roughly equal - which is not possible among those who are not equal in certain respects, yes? Do you see what I mean? You can really relate, only on the level. [220] But at the same time, if you are not on the level with someone you should not pretend that you are. Accept the fact that you are not on the level, but either you are more experienced than he is or he is more experienced than you, and relate within that framework. That's better than trying to pretend that you are on the level when you aren't. And of course you shouldn't pretend that you are not on the level when you are. So one relates best, as it were, on the level, if that is objectively possible, if in fact you are on the level. And those with whom or to whom you naturally relate are those who are, at least in certain respects, on the level with you.

Dave: This challenges the idea that all people are equal.

S: Well some people are equal to one another, if you want to use that word equal, but not all people are equal. You know how uninteresting life would be if they were. Suppose you couldn't find anyone better than you were, or more experienced than you, anyone to whom you could look up. That would be a dreadful state of affairs. So people are not all equal in the sense of being quantitatively equivalent, or interchangeable. If things are equal they should be interchangeable, but no two human beings are interchangeable. You could say no two human beings are equal. They're roughly equal for certain practical purposes, that's all you can say. You do certainly come in to contact with people who are roughly your equals, your peers. They are the people that you communicate most easily and freely and positively with. You can have a very good communication with someone who is less experienced than you are, or more experienced than you are, but you also need the communication with your equals. It gets a bit tiring if you are always communicating to those who are on a lower level or also always communicating or trying to communicate with those on a higher level. You need to be able to communicate quite a bit with those who are more or less on your own level too. If you have all three, well then you're just made, yes? Life is just wonderful.

Chintamani: Would you be a bit more specific there Bhante? You say that certain qualities... You can get rid of individual people, as we're made up of certain qualities, which are more or less developed. And certain qualities relate with equal qualities, and in some respects one may be inferior, superior, the same or not.[221]

S: One could say that to those who are on a lower level, or with regard to those who are on a lower level, you can practise generosity. With regard to those on the same level you practise sharing and with regard to those on a higher level you practise offering. So there's giving,

sharing, and offering, you could say. And if you have opportunities for all three then you are very lucky. So compassion, metta, and faith. Compassion, friendliness, and devotion. Yes? The three great emotional relationships. Compassion for those, as it were, below, friendliness towards your peers, and devotion towards those who are more developed than you are yourself. That's a healthy emotional life or balanced emotional life. So, "Peer with his peers, aloof from crooked men, of boundless wisdom is the Man-just-come." Another characteristic of the Enlightened person, the true individual, is "anantapanno", of infinite understanding, of infinite wisdom. Why do you think wisdom is said to be infinite? Can it in fact be infinite?

Ratnapani: I think it has to be.

S: But what does that mean? What does it imply to say that wisdom is infinite?

Devamitra: Has no bounds.

S: There's no bounds, yes, but what does that mean? You're just putting the same thing into other words.

Devamitra: Unconditioned.

S: Unconditioned, yes. It's as though wisdom is not a concrete something, it's more like a possibility, a potentiality. If you have infinite wisdom, it means that your wisdom is capable of being applied to an infinity of circumstances. Not that wisdom itself is a quality which is infinite, but that that wisdom is equal to all conceivable circumstances, all conceivable possibilities. This is what it means, more.

Voice: Could you say that...

S: For instance, ordinary knowledge. Yes, you know a certain [222] amount, you know so many facts, so you can say that your knowledge is finite. You can theoretically postulate an infinite knowledge, a knowledge which involves an infinity of facts. But wisdom is not infinite in that sort of way.

Dick: I was thinking of the wise man as being the open man, receptive.

S: Well the wise man is the man who is capable of dealing with any circumstances that maybe arise. Or that may happen to arise. Do you see the distinction? You mustn't think wisdom, it is a power or a capacity. I mean, not a body of knowledge, even a body of wisdom.

Ratnapani: It's something that penetrates into truth, that penetrates reality. If it wasn't infinite it would suggest that reality stopped at a certain level and that was all of it.

S: Right, yes.

Ratnapani: Which is a bit silly really. (unclear...) a confusion of realities.

S: Wisdom is, as it were, a faculty which is capable of infinite extension, or an infinity of applications. For instance, to put it in more concrete Buddhist terms, a part of wisdom is to know that everything is impermanent. And really you know it and realize it, yes? But you don't, as it were, carry a body of knowledge around in your head, well, this is impermanent, that is impermanent. Wisdom is the sum total of all those knowledges, plus the sum totals of all sorts of other knowledges. No, you've got a certain quality of penetration, a certain attitude. As soon as a conditioned thing comes up in front of you, you look at it and say, "Oh yes, that's impermanent," yes? You can do that to any number of conditioned things that come up in front of you, to an infinity of them. In that sense your wisdom is infinite. So

Of boundless wisdom is the Man-just-come,
Unsoiled by anything of here or hence,

He is unsoiled, pure, untainted. What is this word for... anupalitto, yes, stainless, unsmearred, unsmirched. What do you [223] think of purity as a spiritual ideal nowadays? That you should be pure, stainless, immaculate, without stain, "vimala"? (laughter) What do you think of purity as a spiritual ideal now? Does one speak or think in terms of purity? I must become pure, I must purify myself, I must be pure. Does one think in those terms, or is that one of the old fashioned virtues?

Voice: I think I do. I'm sure I do.

S: You do. Yes, but what does it convey to you or what does it connote?

Voice: Well, sort of like a cleansing thing.

S: It also suggests a lack of admixture, as when you speak of, say, pure colour or pure white sugar, there's no admixture of any foreign matter or foreign body. So this also suggests a sort of complete integration, a complete harmony. Nothing that is foreign, nothing that is inharmonious. Whereas I think why nowadays the word purity is not a very popular one is that it has moralistic associations, when you think of the "league of purity", and you think of Mary Whitehouse and all the rest of it, which gives a rather sinister twist to it for many people. You think of purity in moral rather than psychological terms, whereas purity is a psychological and spiritual thing, not just a moral thing. Or not even a moral thing, one might say. I think it's because of these rather unfortunate moralistic associations that people don't think very readily or easily, or many people don't think in terms of purity, or of purity as a spiritual ideal.

Ratnapani: Purification has always come across - talking about the upasaka's life - as being a process of purification. That does come across. So I can think of meditation as something that purifies, but actual purity sounds really a bit yucky, a bit sugary, a bit nauseating.

S: But why? Nauseating is rather a strong word, why does the idea of purity nauseate you?

Ratnapani: It's a false Christian purity, an hypocritical purity, castrated purity.[224]

Dave: It has a sense of being washed out.

S: (laughing) Washed out rather than just washed.

Dick: It implies weakness.

S: In the Victorian period, to say of anyone "well he's a very pure-minded young man" was highly complimentary, but if you were called a pure-minded young man by somebody, well how would you feel about that?

Voice: Yeugh!

S: (laughs)

Chintamani: If you just took the words, it would make you feel good.

S: Yes, but there's a connotation that you personally would pick up on. If Mrs Whitehouse came on and said, "Oh, Chintamani, you're such a pure-minded young man!"

Devamitra: But it depends who said it, though. If SHE said it of course one would shrink. I remember someone actually saying to me that they thought I was rather pure, I took it as rather a compliment, and I appreciated it.

S: Well unmixed, integrated, whole. Direct. Perhaps we should use the word more in a positive sense, or in its positive sense.

Vimalamitra: I'm sure if you did, with the right kind of feeling behind it, then the word would change.

S: "Unsoiled by anything of here or hence": "here or hence" is an idiom meaning this world or the next world. You're not touched, not tainted, by anything belonging to this world or the next. In other words you're not even thinking in terms of heaven, or any sort of higher conditioned attainment. You're not touched, not soiled, even by that.

I want to go back and say a little bit more about this [225] "boundless wisdom". I feel we've not really exhausted that. Not only "boundless wisdom" but the, as it were, boundlessness of the wise man. I think this also ties up with, or ties in with, confidence or lack of confidence. Do you know what I mean? Or can you see what I'm getting at?

Devamitra: Lack of confidence is a limiting factor; confidence is an expansive experience.

S: Well let me sort of give a comparison. Someone may feel quite confident because he's provided for all possible contingencies, yes? But is he really confident? No, his confidence depends on the fact that he has made provision for all those contingencies, yes? So his is a limited and conditioned confidence.

But if you are confident without feeling any need to make any provision for any contingencies, then you may be said to be infinitely confident, yes? So it's just the same, as it were, with infinite wisdom. You don't need to know anything. Your infinite wisdom consists in the fact that you don't need to know anything, because you can know in the true sense whenever you need to know. You don't need to lay up or store up your knowledge or your wisdom, but you have the confidence that it is there all the time, it is not something separable from you. It's something which you have, which you are, and which can come into operation whenever circumstances require it to. It's not even anything you have to think about; like when you are answering questions: you know - if you know your Buddhism really well - you don't have to bother what sort of question people are going to ask you and what sort of answer you are going to give, you just sit down and wait for the questions to come. You don't even think what question might come, but you answer them as and when they come, you have that sort of confidence. So it's the same thing with wisdom. This infinite wisdom is the wisdom which has, as it were, confidence that whatever comes up, whatever objects come into view, it will be able to know their true nature. That is wisdom. So wisdom is infinite in this sort of way, that an infinity of objects can come up in front of it; it knows that it will know them, it knows that it will see what they are really like, their true nature. But even this is not really the right way of putting it, because wisdom doesn't even need to know that - even that it doesn't need to know, that it can know.[226] Just like the real hero never thinks about danger. One who is a hero, but not a real hero, thinks, "well however dangerous the situation I can cope," but the real hero doesn't even think of danger, the idea of danger doesn't occur to him. So it is a bit like that. So the Enlightened person is, as it were, equal to any situation. And this also ties up with him being the man-of-naught, not tied to any particular position or situation, so therefore he can function in any direction as required. Zero can become infinity. One can't become infinity, much less still two or three, but zero can.

Anyway I think we had better leave it there, unless there are any further little points on what we've done this morning that anyone wants to raise. What sort of general feeling do you get from the Buddha's description of the man who is worthy of oblation, who becomes the ideal man, the Tathagata, the Enlightened man, the Buddha? What's your general impression so far?

Dave: He knows a lot.

S: He knows a lot. Who?

Dave: The Buddha.

S: The Buddha - well - not only knows a lot, he has infinite wisdom.

Dick: It's a pretty desirable state to get to.

S: Any sort of feelings about the approach to the state, or the way of looking at it, or describing it?

Devamitra: It does sound a tremendous vastness.

Ratnapani: He's come to it from a negative way round.

S: Yes, there is that, very much so. I mean, Indian language almost obliges one to speak in that sort of way.

Ratnapani: It does have very unfortunate connotations, effects rather, on understanding in the West, doesn't it?[227]

S: See, when one experiences the positive, and everybody sees that you're experiencing it, and they're experiencing it too, it doesn't matter that your language technically-speaking is negative, no one misunderstands. But transplant, or translate, that negative language into a Western tongue, all those negative ideas even, and there may be very serious misunderstanding. As with this word nirvana: scholars debated for decades, even centuries, whether it meant total annihilation or not. And some of them still believe that the Buddhist state of nirvana is a state of total annihilation, and that is what Buddhism teaches.

Voice: I found that a bit of a stumbling block myself really, the cessation of everything that I really most valued.

S: Well it's like referring to the rain stopping, and not going on to mention that the sun comes out when the rain stops. You just talk in terms of the rain stopping. But you forget - or you don't think it necessary - to mention the sun shining afterwards because it seems so obvious to you, anybody would know that. You know that when the rain stops the sun shines, but apparently some people, if you tell them that the rain stops, they think it becomes dark, there's just blackness.

Voice: Was Hare a Buddhist? Hare? I don't know if he's still alive. The translator.

S: I don't know, I doubt it very much. I doubt it.

Dave: When was this translated?

S: Not all that long ago - 1944 the preface - so that means about thirty years ago, or a little less than thirty years. So it's not bad. Many of the translations of Pali texts that are in circulation were made eighty or ninety years ago, when not very much was understood about Buddhism at all.

Voice: The people who did it must have had some pretty strong feel for it. It seems an incredible amount of work.

S: Right. Indeed. All right let's leave it there.[228]

S: All right let's go on. We're in the middle, don't forget, of the Buddha's description of the Enlightened man, the Tathagata. And we've come to verse 15.

(469) In whom abideth neither guile nor pride,
He who is free of greed and 'mine' and hope,
Void of all wrath, exceeding cool-of-self,
A brahman he, with stain of sorrow razed,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come!"

S: Yes. There are quite few points to discuss there. "In whom abideth neither guile nor pride". That's a very good almost literal translation, but it doesn't bring out the full force of the meaning. The word for guile is maya. M-A-Y-A. Both of the As are long. Now maya is a term which crops up repeatedly in Indian philosophy, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. It's sometimes used in an unspecialized, non-technical sense, and sometimes in a highly-specialized very technical sense. Here it seems to be used in a more popular sense. Sometimes you find in the Pali texts, especially in texts like the Sutta Nipata, certain terms are used in a general, popular sort of sense. They haven't yet crystallized into technical terms. Do you know what I mean? So this word maya means something like delusion. It's a cheat, it's a show, and especially a sort of magical show, a magical illusion, or a mirage. So it suggests something false, something that isn't what it seems to be. You're all familiar with the phenomenon of a mirage, you know what a mirage is? A fata morgana, something you see in the distance but it isn't actually there. So if you say of someone that in whom, in him there is no maya, no deceit, no cheating, no illusory sort of shows, what are you sort of suggesting?

Voice: He's straight.

S: He's straight, he is what he seems to be, he's real. Maya also means unreal, in the sense that the mirage which you see in the desert is unreal. The oasis, the palm trees that you see, or the city that you see in the desert, aren't really there, they're unreal. They are only a mirage. So it's not just guile in the sense of craftiness but it's general deceitfulness of character and behaviour, which produces on other people a totally false impression, and makes you seem other than you are. The [229] Tathagata is completely free from all that. It also suggests perhaps freedom from acting. The Tathagata doesn't put on an act. He doesn't make himself out to be what he isn't. It also suggests being oneself, not presenting any image which is not really oneself to other people, having no persona, having no mask. It implies all these sorts of things. The Tathagata is free from all these things. So you notice how careful one has to be with translations, because if you just take the word guile literally, it just doesn't give you that meaning at all. It's quite a good word and, yes, surely the Tathagata is free from guile, guile is one form of maya, one form of deceit. But the word maya itself conveys far more than just guile. So "In whom abideth neither guile nor pride". The word for pride is "mano" which is more often translated as conceit, and you may remember that it is the tenth of the ten fetters, the ten samyojanas, the last one to be broken. So mano or conceit is something very basic, very fundamental. It's your basic ego-identity. So the Tathagata has got no ego-identity, and he puts on no shows, no false pretences. Do you think there is any reason for these two being linked? No maya and no mano? There is of course the alliteration.

Chintamani: Well if you've got a very strong sense of ego and self, you've really got to put on a show to maintain it.

S: Or to disguise it.

Chintamani: What, to pretend, you put on an act to pretend you are really like that, you're really very nice, and so on?

Devamitra: Presumably one can only take pride, in this sort of negative sense, in something, which was unreal anyway, sort of a persona.

Ratnapani: With conceit I've understood it to be a more general term, we tend to take it as just thinking that you are better than you are.

S: Yes, conceit is not thinking that you are better than you are, conceit is thinking that you are. This is why I said a sense of basic ego-identity. We are making do with this English word conceit; it isn't very adequate. The word mano in Pali and Sanskrit conveys [230] a different sort of impression.

Ratnapani: Well, thinking that you are other than you are, which is sort of not...

S: Mano is the sort of attachment to and identification with your own conditioned self and the unwillingness to overcome that, or to change that or dissolve that. Yes, attachment to yourself as you are; one can also paraphrase it in that way. "I'm all right as I am." Maya is also something like "trickery". For instance there is the travelling magician, the mayavadin, who goes around from village to village, and he's supposed to gather a crowd of villagers together and perform various feats of magic, maya, which are sometimes just sleight of hand, just trickery and jugglery. So it's got that suggestion too. For instance he has a pot, plants a seed in it, and puts a cloth over it, and says, "Keep on looking, I'm not putting anything in there," and whips off the cloth and there's a fully grown plant. Tricks like that, these are called maya.

(end of side one)

So it's not only a magical delusion but sort of trickery, jugglery. The word conveys all these sort of things. So one can do this as it were with one's own character and with one's own self. One can indulge in trickery and jugglery, making oneself appear other than what one really is. So the Tathagata is free from all this. So in whom abideth neither maya nor mano, he who is free of greed and mine and hope - vitalobho. Free from greed. Lobha is this very basic word that you get in Buddhism as one of the three unskillful roots. Lobha, dosa, and moha. You're quite familiar with these terms, yes? Greed, hatred, and delusion or bewilderment or confusion, symbolized of course by the three animals at the centre of the wheel of life. Lobha is symbolized by the cock. So, free from greed. And "mine", we dealt with that before: "amamo". But here's a word we haven't dealt with: "niraso" - free from hope. The Enlightened person is said to be free from hope, and also incidentally free from fear. So what does it mean to be free from hope? Is that a very positive state? We don't usually look at it like that do we? Why does the Tathagata not hope, why is he free from hope?

Vimalamitra: He knows, he doesn't need to hope for...

S: Yes, but isn't it more than the fact that he knows?[231]

Chintamani: He's quite happy where he is.

S: He's quite happy where he is. I mean, when do we hope? What is hope?

Dave: It's looking forward to something in the future.

S: It's looking forward to something pleasurable in the future and wanting it to come. But if you're completely content with the present why should you look forward to the future? If you are going to enjoy the same happiness under all circumstances regardless of what may come, well what reason have you to look forward to anything? Your state then will be precisely the same as your state now, i.e. you'll be Enlightened. That's the basic fact that will remain unchanged. So you've no need to look forward to anything. Whatever happens, you will remain Enlightened, so what have you to fear? No hope, no fear.

Dave: How true is that to a normal person?

S: I think a normal person can't help hoping and fearing. You can't help hoping and fearing. You can't help looking forward to something good that is coming or fearing something bad that may be coming. But I think if hoping becomes too important to you and if you are thinking far more about the pleasant things in the future than what you have actually got in the present, it means you are sort of alienated from the present and beginning to live in the future, and that is not very healthy. If, for instance, the thought crosses your mind, say this week, or just today, "Oh well, next week I'll be in the country, how nice," and then you get on with your work, well fair enough, but if you have to be thinking about the future all the time because the present is so unbearable, or because you want to escape from the present, then that isn't very helpful.

Ratnapani: More of that "hole filling".

S: More of the hole filling, yes. So there can be a sort of neurotic hope. I don't think we've got a word for that. Pleasurable anticipation is quite healthy. If you set your heart on something happening, on some pleasant experience coming your way next week, you'll be quite anxious in case it doesn't come. And maybe by the [232] time it does arrive, and you are in the process of enjoying it, you'll have been so ridden or riddled by anxiety you won't even be able to enjoy it properly. So the Tathagata is free of hope, and also free of fear. "Void of all wrath." The word for wrath here is kodho, or krudha in Sanskrit, which is a very strong word meaning violent anger and hatred. "Exceeding cool-of-self". We've had this before and we've seen it isn't really "cool-of-self", it's really abhinibbutatto, "with oneself having become completely nirvanized". In other words everything unskillful in oneself has been burnt up, one can say, fizzled out, has become extinct. But it doesn't mean that nothing is left, that you've experienced annihilation. Even though it may be very difficult to say what is left and what sort of state you are now in, or in what sense there is a "you" surviving at all. "A brahman he, with stain of sorrow razed", "sokamalam ahasi". There is no more stain of sorrow. You notice that sorrow is described as a stain, or grief it is, rather than sorrow. "Soka" is regarded as a stain. What does that suggest? Well, there is nothing particularly meritorious, nothing particularly virtuous, in being sorrowful or full of grief. In the New Testament, Christ is described as a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as though that is something worthy. [This is a prophecy of Isaiah, in the Old Testament: Isaiah 53:3, tr.] And Christians who want to identify themselves with Christ sometimes feel that they have to be sorrowful and full of grief to be like Christ, though according to the Buddha's teaching grief is a stain to be got rid of. You shouldn't have any grief, you shouldn't be sorrowful. But where does compassion come in then? What do you think about that? And does the Bodhisattva feel grief? Does the Bodhisattva feel sorrow?

Dave: Not permanently.

S: Or at all? Well if he feels it at all, surely he feels it permanently, because people are always suffering, there won't be any end of people who suffer.

Devamitra: Is it sort of sympathy for their suffering?

S: It's sympathy. Grief and sorrow seem to be ego-based, whether they are on your own account or on the account of other people. But you can have a sort of selfless sympathy for those who suffer [233] without, in a strange way, your own inner tranquillity and even peacefulness and joy being impaired. It's the sympathy of the healthy person for the unhealthy person, the sick person. But the healthy person remains healthy.

Voice: What about when somebody, say near and dear, dies? The sorrow that one feels then. Is that just trying to fill the void, the emptiness that is created by that person's death?

S: No, I don't mean if someone near and dear dies. I think the normal person does experience great grief or great sorrow. If you are normal and healthy you get over that, you don't cling on to it. I cited the example on the last study retreat of a woman I met some time ago, a year or two ago, who told me the sad story of her life. She was by that time aged about 55 and she said her husband had left her and that she just could not get over that, that every day she thought of him and she wanted him to come back, and of course he'd left her for another woman and that woman wasn't doing him any good. And he was miserable with that other woman and she was encouraging his worst side, whereas she, the wife, had encouraged his better side, et cetera. So she was really grieving over this, and she said she just couldn't get on without him, and she just lived for the day he would come back. So I said, well how long is it since he left you, and she said, well, twelve years. She just hadn't got over it, and was still, almost, counting the days to when he would come back. So I mean, you can say, if your husband - or your wife for that matter - leaves you, yes you have experienced grief and sorrow, but if you're a healthy person, you'll still get over it, you certainly won't be suffering, brooding over it, after twelve years. It's not that one should be, or try to be, cold and indifferent and not feel anything. That's the other extreme. If you feel, you feel, and you have to acknowledge that. But if you are healthy you will get over it, in the course of time.

Voice: I remember something about this, in this connection, I think Marpa - his son dies and he weeps. I think Milarepa or somebody says, well why do you cry? You'd think everything like that as being delusion.[234]

S: Well it may be, you see. I think a completely Enlightened person wouldn't be upset on such an occasion. Don't forget what happened at the time of the parinirvana of the Buddha, when the Buddha passed away. The arahant disciples, those who were Enlightened, were not moved, they did not feel grief. But those disciples who were not Enlightened, but were very devoted to the Buddha, they experienced very great grief and sorrow at the thought that they were losing the Buddha. So that this gives one a sort of clue, that if one is really Enlightened one doesn't feel even any momentary grief or sorrow. But an unenlightened person, even someone who is very spiritually developed, may well feel, at least for a short time. And certainly the normal healthy person will feel grief and sorrow, for a longer or shorter time. But the normal "healthy" person always gets over it in the end or even relatively quickly, after a few months. The worst of it will be over. Even it might be your father or mother, son or daughter, husband or wife that you lost, brother or sister. You do get over it. So "with stain of sorrow razed". It is really the attachment that produces the grief and the sorrow. So you are completely free from grief and sorrow only when all attachment is removed.

Ratnapani: I read something recently, in that magazine that Michael Waller started, about a Vietnamese chap who, by way of illustration of his goodness, someone said that they went to see him, and he told them that he hadn't slept last night because he'd read of the death of some Vietnamese refugees. And they wondered whether reading a report in a newspaper and then not sleeping all night might be an example of his tenderness, but perhaps not of his Enlightenment or his ...

S: What can you do? If you can do something, if you can stay up all night helping people, fair enough. But what good does it do you, or them, to lose a night's sleep over it? It is, as it were, a waste of emotional energy. I think one has to be very careful about that: this sort of sentimental wastage of emotional energy. You could open your newspaper every day and spend the whole day grieving and sorrowing over the reports of all the people who have been killed, murdered, et cetera. But what good would it do anybody? You'd just add to the sum total of [235] negative emotion in the world. If you can't do anything to help, it is better to stay clear and not think about it and not feel about it. Save your emotional energy for those situations where you can be of help, otherwise you can drive yourself crazy just thinking of other people who are in the world who are suffering at this very moment. You can't afford to think about it. It's almost a sort of emotional self-indulgence to think about it. Help when you can, whenever you can, and use your emotional energy for that. So therefore, in this verse, the Buddha says,

In whom abideth neither guile (maya) nor pride,
He who is free of greed and 'mine' and hope,
Void of all wrath, exceeding cool-of-self,
A brahman he, with stain of sorrow razed.

You notice in quite a few instances, the Buddha's description of the Enlightened man, the Tathagata, goes very much against our sort of Western religious way of thinking? Have you noticed that? It's not quite as one would have expected, as it were, of or from a spiritual ideal.

Ratnapani: People who've just read these words or heard these words about our ideal often are quite resentful about it all. "That's not spiritual, that's not good."

S: Well it's not religious. I think one must acknowledge this and say, yes, it is not a religious ideal, we're not trying to be religious. We want to have nothing to do with being religious. This reminds me of something I was going to read to you: a letter which I got today, which is very relevant from this point of view, I'll go and get it and read it.

This letter is from Maitreya, who is one of the Finnish Order members. Have any of you here

met him? You have? Anyway this is his latest letter, received this morning.

"Dear Bhante, Last weekend I went to see some people who belonged to the Marxist-Leninist movement in Finland. I was quite surprised of the feeling they got. I think it might be most positive feeling in a group that I have yet seen in Finland. It reminds me of my early days when I was involved in underground movement. Maybe it's the danger in the situation which makes people close to each other, because this is the only movement that is openly against the Soviet Union, which in a country like this is very dangerous, but honest if not wise.[236]

"I noticed that there are certain features in their thinking that are not so far from Buddhism. First their way of living is very much, as much as I have seen, Hinayana. They emphasize very much morality and also their activity is based on dana. For instance, when I was there somebody stood up and said that they're going to start an electronic department, and said that they needed a telephone. Before he had finished two telephones were offered. It might not always be like that, but I got a feeling that it might be much like that. Second, their aspiration is a bit like Mahayana, something like Bodhisattva kind of thinking. Third, they draw their inspiration from China, and also very much from Albania, which means that they are interested in acupuncture, t'ai chi, and traditions like that have got Chinese background. They have even tried yoga but the guy who led the yoga does not have much experience in that. (Maitreya by the way is a yoga teacher.) I talked quite a lot with him and he seemed to be an open kind of person and not so much an ego-trip, maybe not at all. Even suggested that I may give some lessons in yoga, which would be good and make it possible to have contact without being so much politically involved. Another interesting feature was their ideology of the function of art is in the process of taking form. I think this is very interesting... (I won't read that bit - I'm coming now to the bit I'm more concerned with.) I'm going to concentrate my activity away from the Centre (that is, the FWBO centre). I want to make closer contact with all kinds of people, to know where people's minds are at. I've been going to the centre now about two years and noticed that I want to look at the world from a different point of view for a while. There are a lot of people interested in meditation, about the idea of higher development, but once you mention Buddhism, off they go. This may be because Buddhism doesn't have any history in Finland and it is associated with religion. And people have the idea that it is something for neurotic people, like religions generally, or that it is some kind of middle-class entertainment. I have noticed that when I have talked of meditation in yoga classes people are interested. Some have come afterwards to ask where these meditation courses are held. Once they hear "Buddhist" you don't see them any more, they don't even come to yoga classes any more. This has happened so many times that I have become very careful to use the term before I turn off anybody. On the [237] other hand there are all the time more people who are actually creating living history of Buddhism in Finland. It's like double situation. Love Maitreya."

Vimalamitra: It is a bit like that on a flag day, when you're going around with your tin, as soon as they see Buddhism, as soon as you mention Buddhism...

S: It's because they associate Buddhism with religion, or classify Buddhism as a religion. So I think one has to get away as much as one possibly can from this religious association and this religious image. If one is going to, well first of all if one is going to present oneself as one really is because one is not religious, in the sense that they understand the word religion.

Ratnapani: What is a religion?

S: I don't think it's a question so much of what it really is, but of what it has come to mean in people's minds. You could of course try to say well, we are the real religion, ours is the real religious approach, but I don't think ... you see, because this is what the Buddha also tried with Brahminism, that he put forward the idea of the real brahman, but it didn't really work, historically speaking. The brahmans staged a comeback eventually, because the word "brahman" was there. So I think, probably, it is much better to say that we've nothing to do with religion, we are not a religion. And if necessary eventually try and drop the word Buddhism - though it might be quite difficult - and speak of the sasana or something of that

sort. But dissociate ourselves as it were from all religious associations.

Ratnapani: What anyway is a religion, technically speaking?

S: That's difficult to say in a few words. The Bible, the dictionary, would say a sort of system of faith, and occult and so on.

Ratnapani: And some definitions presume theism too, don't they?[238]

S: Yes, but even if you say Buddhism is a non-theistic religion, which certainly helps, still you use the word religion. But what do you think most people sort of feel, or a lot of people at least feel, when you use the word religion, or they learn that you belong to a religious movement?

Dave: They're going to have something rammed down their throats.

Voice: Or they think it's some escapist activity, or that sort of thing.

S: Because, in a way they're wrong in looking at escapism even like that, because what's wrong in escaping if there is something to escape from? One could say that. But I think they get an impression of something effete.

Voice: What does that mean?

S: Sort of degenerate, something lacking in life, lacking in energy, cloistered, cut off, dusty, out of date, old fashioned, old maidenish. I'm sure a lot of people get this sort of feel off the word religion or religious. And one can clearly see from what the Buddha is saying that the Buddha's ideal, or the Buddhist ideal, was not a religious ideal as the word religious is understood nowadays in this country. So if people think that Buddhism is a religion, and you are following it as a religion, well they're not really seeing you as you are whether you in the sense of the Movement as a whole, or as an individual belonging to that movement.

Devamitra: I've not come across, I mean not used, the word religion or religious much in ordinary vocabulary, but quite often used the terms Buddhist and Buddhism, and that seems to arouse a lot of resistance especially among intellectuals because ...

S: Admittedly it may be due to quite a bit of conditioning on their part, and a lack of open-mindedness on their part. One has to say that. They ought to be prepared to listen until they understand better what it is all about. But when it is described as Buddhism, then it becomes classifiable as a religion. You see [239] you can get a book on comparative religion, there's a chapter on Hinduism and a chapter on Buddhism, a chapter on Judaism, a chapter on Christianity, et cetera. So it's lumped with all of those, automatically.

Devamitra: But you have mentioned the possibility of dropping "Buddhism" and "Buddhist".

S: I have, but it's going to be quite difficult to do, yes?

Devamitra: How would one even begin to do it?

S: I haven't really thought yet.

Vimalamitra: You could just, kind of, drop all titles. Maybe you could just talk.

S: But what about your actual source of inspiration? You find your inspiration in what are called the "Buddhist texts", you don't find it in the Bible, you don't even find it in Plato. So how are you going to describe or acknowledge that?

Vimalamitra: Well maybe you could just say basically "Truth", and "Reality" and use terms

like that. And from that you could draw back and say, well, in Buddhist literature they...

Ratnapani: But that's pretending to be other than we are.

Vimalamitra: Well, no it isn't because that is what we are. Truth and Reality, Buddhism is just...

S: It's more a question of making clear that one as it were makes use of the material found in the Buddhist texts, rather than accept that material in the way that say Christians accept the Bible. For instance, someone might get inspiration from reading Plato, but he doesn't become a Platonist or a follower of Platonism.

Prakasha: There are a number of groups who do mix everything together.

S: That is a great danger, because you mix together in an [240] intellectual sort of way and end up by not practising or following anything. So there certainly needs to be a definite path and definite tradition and definite way that you are following. The point to be clarified is that one doesn't want to present this as a religion in the sense that the term religion is currently understood, at least in this country. That the activity that I'm engaged in, and wholeheartedly engaged in, without any sort of mixing or any sort of compromise, is not the kind of activity which could be described as religious. This is what one wants to put across. I'm not leading a religious life, I'm trying to gain Enlightenment. Maybe one should be a bit provocative in that sort of way. "I don't believe in religion, I'm Buddhist!" Or "I'm against all religions, I'm a Buddhist," or "the Buddha was against religion, that's what it means to be a Buddhist."

Ratnapani: That sounds like quite a good poster.

S: If the point is made that, well after all Buddhism is included among the great religions of the world, well that's just people's mistake. Buddhism just doesn't belong there. When it degenerates it becomes a religion. But Buddhism, in the sense of the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma, has got very little to do with religion, if anything.

Ratnapani: One can lament that Buddhism in places has become a religion.

S: Yes, right. And quite justly so. Trevor Ling goes into this quite a bit in his book "The Buddha", and this is one of the reasons why we are going to study it. He's very strongly of the conviction that Buddhism is not to be regarded as a religion, not to be treated as a religion or classified as a religion. And he tries to show that the Buddha's intentions were quite different.

Devamitra: Maybe one could adopt some phraseology like "Buddhism is revolutionary", because that's one. I mean it is in fact revolutionary.

S: Right, yes.[241]

Devamitra: And that's one of the more acceptable themes of the day, as it were.

S: Well I've said somewhere or other that awareness is revolutionary. One has to be a bit careful about using contemporary catch-phrases or catch-words, and follow it up by explaining what you mean by revolutionary. Otherwise they'll think that you're revolutionary in their sense, and they'll be liking you for the wrong reasons, instead of disliking you for the wrong reasons. But this is certainly the general impression that we get from the Buddha's description of the Tathagata, that it does not represent a religious ideal in the contemporary sense or the current sense of the term religious. Right let's go on, next verse.

(470) He who hath razed all harbours of the mind,
In whom abides no claim to things whate'er,
He, unattached to things of here or hence,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: Nivesanam yo manaso ahasi: "He who hath razed all harbours of the mind." It's not quite that, but that is quite a good translation. The word "razed" - both in this version and the previous one - isn't the original at all, the original is simply "in whom is not": in whom is no harbour, no abode, no dwelling place for the mind. The word for dwelling place is nivesa. I rather suspect that's a misprint, it should be nivasa, [PTS also has nivesanam, tr.] but we'll leave that for a moment. This harbour of the mind, the dwelling place of the mind, what do you think it means to have a harbour or dwelling place for the mind?

Vimalamitra: Somewhere where it can kind of come into or stop, or...

S: Where it settles down.

Devamitra: Where it holds to an identity.

Voice: A private place.

S: This is emphasized particularly in the Perfection of Wisdom literature, that the Bodhisattva's mind does not abide anywhere. [242] That it doesn't stick anywhere. So what is this non-abiding or this non-sticking of the mind?

Aloka: You're not identifying yourself with anything in particular.

S: Yes. It is in fact not only stopping, but it's entering and settling down, entering and stopping. So this suggests a certain kind of situation in which you stop, in which you settle down. So what sort of situation would that be?

Devamitra: Coming back home again.

S: Coming back home again. It's also a security. To settle down means to make yourself secure, or to want to be secure. So you can settle down in a material situation, in a place. You can settle down in a relationship, you can settle down in your knowledge, you can settle down in your particular world, in your particular sphere, because you feel safer, you feel secure. So it's this sort of stopping, this sort of settling down, that the Tathagata is free from. So this sort of settling down suggests that - if you want to use the word "identification" - the identification with a limited, closed situation, which will enable you to feel safe and secure. But once you do that of course the possibility of progress is precluded.

Chintamani: Is that what is wrong with resting on one's laurels?

S: Well, if they are laurels. Sometimes they are not even anything as heroic as laurels. Sometimes you rest on your failures, yes?

Ratnapani: I seem to remember you once saying that to be making progress you should feel that you are hanging upside down in a vacuum, or something along those lines.

S: Well, sometimes. But as I mentioned, this whole point is insisted upon very much in the Perfection of Wisdom literature with regard to the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva does not settle down anywhere, he regards nowhere as home, literally or metaphorically.[243]

Prakasha: That's one of the things that's most evident in our society, isn't it, that everyone settles down?

S: "It's time you settled down." Hare uses the word "harbour" which is not bad. It's as though harbours are all right if you go sailing out from them. So even these home-like situations are all right if you go forth. But supposing you just think, "Oh well I don't want to go out to sea any more, it's all rough and dangerous out there, let's stay in harbour, let's just settle down in harbour." So you moor your boat, which is meant for going out to sea in, and it just becomes your home. You just tie it up at the quayside and you become a landlubber, spiritually

speaking, even though you live in a boat. You could if you wanted extend the metaphor, you could say, "Worldly people live in houses, non-religious people live in houses on the shore, but religious people live in boats and ships which are moored to the quayside and which never go out to sea. But there's just this pretence of being on board ship, or being in a boat. The spiritual people are those who actually sail in their ships, out to sea, and maybe never come back to harbour. So "he who has razed all harbours of the mind, In whom abides no claim to things whatev'er": "pariggaha yassa na santi keci". Which is a bit like not regarding anything as mine, or as one's own, that we've already talked about. "He, unattached to things of here or hence, Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come." Unattached is anupadiyano, which is "not depending upon", maybe making use of, maybe objectively, but certainly not subjectively and emotionally depending. (pause)

So he doesn't settle down anywhere, he doesn't claim anything and he's unattached, independent. The ideal, quite clearly, is rather a heroic one. At the same time it's a very human ideal, the description is very much in human terms. There's no reference to anything supernatural; no reference to any God or anything of that kind.

Chintamani: "Harbouring" is really rather good when you think of things like the raft parable and the ocean of becoming and all that.

S: Yes.

Vimalamitra: If you look on that in psychological ways, you [244] you don't try and remember things or carry things around in your mind. Your mind is always a clear flow, so that it's always there in each moment.

S: Right. Well this is very much akin to the infinite wisdom I was talking about. You don't have to remember your wisdom all the time and carry it around with you, do you? You don't have to remember what you know, because you, the knower, are there all the time. You, the wise man, are there all the time. Your wisdom is on instant demand, instantly available. It's just like the bell: as soon as you strike the bell it gives a note. So as soon as you are struck, as it were, you give forth wisdom. You don't have to have all those sounds humming around you all the time. When the situation is such you will respond in the right way.

Vimalamitra: You don't actually think of that, it just flows.

S: Just as I said, for instance, in answering questions about the Dharma, you don't have to carry around with yourself a list of answers, the answers are all there in you. You are the answers, you are all the answers, so they are instantly available - in the case of the enlightened man that is, in the case of the wise man.

Vimalamitra: That suggests again that everything comes from inside you.

S: Well in a sense it's not inside, it's not outside, it's just you, once you are wise, once you are Enlightened, once you are a real individual. All right; next verse.

(471) He who with mind-intent hath crossed the flood
And Dharma in the yondmost view hath known,
The cankerless who his last body bears,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

Chalmers is a bit astray here. He says, "who stoutly crossed the Flood". There's nothing about stoutly in the text, it's "samahito". [245] Samahito we've already dealt with - susamahitindriya - the well-balanced faculties. So samahito is balanced. Who balanced, integrated, has crossed the flood. What is the flood: "ogham". The flood is the flood of birth and death, samsara, conditioned existence. But "samahito": let's spend a little time on this word. Samahito means something like integrated, together, in a very positive psychological and spiritual sense. It means being in the state of having all one's energies integrated, all working, all moving in the

same direction. And it also suggests meditation, because as I mentioned, the word samadhi is connected with this word samahito. You're familiar with samadhi as a term for meditation, as a term for the dhyanas? So what happens in samadhi? What happens in dhyana? Among other things all your energies come together, at higher and higher levels. Have you noticed this? When you have a good meditation, a successful meditation, it's as though all your energies are flowing together. You feel much more together yourself, your energies become more integrated, you become more integrated. So samahito indicates this state of integration of energies on ever higher and higher levels. So when energies are integrated they become much more powerful because they are no longer divided, no longer fighting among themselves. So if you have all your energies behind a single point, or all your energies converging on a single point, which is what successful meditation is, then you are in a very powerful, positive, vibrant, integrated state of mind and being indeed. And it is through being in this state, or when in this state, or while in this state, that one can "cross the flood". One doesn't cross the flood - one doesn't overcome conditioned existence - unless one's energies are completely integrated, at all levels; that they're all converging. It's just like all the streams of water flowing down from the mountain, all the little streams join up into big streams, the big streams join up into small rivers, the small rivers all join up into big rivers and the big rivers all join up into one very big river that flows straight into the ocean. It's rather like that.

So this is the state or condition of integrated energy, everything flowing together; a very powerful, vibrant, dynamic [246] state. And it is this state - or it is when your energies are in this state - that you can cross the flood, otherwise you can't do very much. If only one little trickle of your energy is behind your meditation you won't get very far. Or if two or three little trickles are behind your spiritual life and practice you won't get very far. You have got to have all the trickles, all the streams, all the rivers, and the great big river itself, behind it. Only then you can make some real progress. So "samahito". Only when one is in this state of unification and therefore balance and integration can one cross the flood.

"Dhamman ca nasi paramaya ditthiya," which Chalmers translates: "whose vision saw the Truth," and Hare more literally: "and Dharma in the yondmost view hath known". It's in or by the yondmost view. You could say the ultimate vision: "who in the ultimate vision has seen the truth". The word ditthi or drsti is used in various ways. It is a view, something that is seen. The term is also used in the sense of opinion, and usually in the Pali texts opinion - ditthi - has a very bad press indeed: one is asked to be free from views, free from opinions. But sometimes the word is used in a positive sense, as here. So ditthi here means sight or vision in the sense of spiritual sight, spiritual vision, insight; seeing the truth, seeing the Dharma: Dharma in the sense of truth.

But what about paramaya ditthiya? Paramaya or parama is that which is beyond. Very often the term "the beyond" is used to refer to nirvana; it is what is beyond this world, or the transcendental. So it is the view or vision of what is beyond, what is transcendental or what is ultimate, as I said. So "who, in his ultimate view, his ultimate vision has seen the truth." So you've got the reference to meditation and you've also got the reference to insight. You've got the reference to what in the later terminology is known as samatha and vipassana. So it's as though the Buddha is saying that with the help of one's united energies one crosses the flood of conditioned existence and in one's ultimate vision one sees what is beyond all that. It's as though unified energy helps you to cross over the conditioned and your spiritual vision enables you to see the unconditioned.

"Khināsavo, antimadehadhari". Khināsavo: this is a word which occurs again and again in the Pali texts. Hare translates it as "cankerless"; Chalmers "whose cankers now are gone", but khināsavo: in whom the asavas have waned away, withered away. [247] It's rather like the withering away of the state in communism. It's the withering away of the cankers; in whom the cankers are withered out, withered away. So what are these cankers, these asavas?

Voice: It's the fetters.

S: No they are not fetters.

Voice: Is it the three cankers?

S: There are three cankers, sometimes four are enumerated, but usually three.

Voice: Is it attachment to becoming?

S: Yes, right. There's kamasava, bhavasava, and vibhavasava, and sometimes a avijjasava is mentioned. Let's look it up.

Voice: Ignorance?

Voice: That's right, yes.

S: It comes from a root which means "that which flows out". It is something which intoxicates, it's a discharge as from a sore, it's a drug, it's a poison. So in other words the asavas represent all that is most negative, most conditioned, in us.

Voice: Desire for sensuous experience, desire for becoming and ...

S: Yes, here a list of four is given. Kamasava, bhavasava, dittha asava, and avijjasava. The set of three which is probably older is kamasava, bhavasava, and avijjasava. One could say that the ditthi here used in the negative sense, the pejorative sense, represents a sort of concretization of avijja, but the first two are always the same.

So what is kamasava? Sometimes asava is translated as bias. I sometimes translate it as bias. It is a flowing in a certain direction, it's a gravitation in a certain direction. But in the sense of the gravitational pull you could say that [248] kamasava represents the, as it were, natural, innate tendency of the mind towards sense experience. I mean, how would you feel if you were shut up in a dark room and experience sensory deprivation? What is your natural tendency? You want to see, you want to hear, you want to feel, you want to take, you want to smell. So there is this very sort of strong tendency of the mind, of the whole being in fact, towards sense experience. You can't do without sense experience for any length of time. In ordinary human terms we almost need sense experience to keep you going. You'd almost break down without it. So there is this very strong, very powerful tendency towards sense experience; which means of course experience of a certain kind, of a certain type, on a certain level of existence. And in Buddhist thought there is a plane of existence called the kamavacara, the plane of sense experience. So it's your strong tendency towards sense experience which, as it were, ties you to this particular plane, you could say; the material plane if you like.

And then bhavasava. Bhava is becoming, but becoming in the sense of existence, conditioned existence. The tendency towards - the craving for - continued worldly existence, continued existence within the samsara.

And then avijjasava: the natural tendency of ignorance to perpetuate itself. One has a natural tendency, as it were, not to want to know; a natural tendency to remain in, to remain settled down in, one's own spiritual blindness and unawareness.

And ditthi asava, the fourth, possibly later, asava. Ditthi represents simply specific forms of avijja concretized or crystallized in the form of philosophical opinions and doctrines and teachings - particular views. So do you get some sense of this word asava? It is the sort of inertness of one's nature, one's conditioned nature, which has this constant tendency, constant weight almost, in the direction of sense experience, continued existence in the world, ignorance and darkness and opinions based thereon. It's the natural heaviness of one's nature, the resistance in one to the higher evolution; it's all that. So your natural tendency is to flow down, to sink, or to backslide.

Voice: This is on a very primordial level.

S: Yes, and it is not only a flowing: it is a flowing, [249] as it were, of something almost poisonous, like a drug that keeps you stupefied or like pus oozing from a boil.

Voice: This previous talk of poisons and cankers and so on has got some suggestion that it is all a bit wrong and wicked to have these things, and how it is really an imbalance, that that is what a human being left alone does, and what we have got to do is more than the ordinary: not just the good but the supreme, not just avoiding the bad but doing the supreme, going beyond the ordinary.

S: Right, yes.

Voice: Well I think, in a sense, maybe not guilty, but as far as I can say, certainly feel rotten that you are like that. Even so-called ordinary, if it means that.

S: Well to put it in rather more neutral everyday terms, to say that someone is under the influence of the asavas means he is very much oriented towards the senses; he wants to go on living in the way that he is familiar with and he's just not interested in spiritual things. This about sums it up, doesn't it? And he has got all sorts of false views that justify his attitude. One need not make it sound too heavy or pseudo-spiritual but this is what it is. You think in terms of sense pleasure and sense enjoyment, you want to go on living in the same old way, in this world, in this life, and the next one too if there is one, if it is possible, and you are just not interested in anything spiritual. You are quite blind to those sorts of values, you just don't want to know. And you've got all sorts of rationalizations supporting that attitude.

So the Arahant, the Enlightened man, the Tathagatha, is khinasava; in him all the asavas have withered away, dried up. And as I mentioned, this word "khinasava" occurs quite often in the Pali texts. It is quite a key term in Pali Buddhism, in the Theravada.

"Who his last body bears": he is born on earth as a human being for the last time. There is nothing left in him which will cause him to be reborn on earth as a human being, or in fact anywhere in the samsara, anywhere on the wheel of life, again. If you want to be reborn you will; if you don't want, you won't. It's as simple as that, according to Buddhism. Most people want, [250] so they are. A few people don't, so they aren't. A Buddhist would regard it as really odd, the fact that some people are worried that they might not be reborn.

Voice: Isn't it inevitable that you get reborn?

S: Well it is according to Buddhism, yes. It is inevitable so long as the asavas are still there. So it is quite foolish for people to worry about it when the asavas are present in full force, and they are worried about not being reborn. They all go to seances and try to get proof of life after death! But you do go on living.

Voice: So really one can say that there is really no excuse at all for not becoming Enlightened.

S: You could say that.

Voice: Or for not trying to become Enlightened.

Voice: What about this... something that Chintamani just mentioned about the bad feeling being there, although you said not necessarily a guilt feeling? What I meant was I think it's good to feel rotten that you are like that.

S: What does one mean though by feeling rotten?

Voice: Well, you want to get rid of it.

Voice: I don't think that is, I think if you are feeling rotten there is something a bit wrong.

S: Traditionally, the Buddha would talk much more in terms of being aware of the situation and doing something about it.

Voice: Well the initial sort of awareness that comes may make you feel really like that.

S: Hmm. For instance there are these similes of the man who suddenly realizes that his turban is on fire: his first impulse is to fling it off. And then the person who suddenly realizes [251] that there is a poisonous snake round his neck: his impulse is to fling it off. He has a sort of feeling of loathing and horror and fear. So one can feel very much like that with regard to one's own skilful mental states. He has a sort of feeling of loathing and horror and fear. So one can feel very much like that with regard to one's own unskilful mental states. You suddenly wake up to what they are really like and you just want to get rid of them. You want to just vomit them up, as it were. You feel them, you experience them, as something really unpleasant and nasty, in a sense foreign to you. You just want to get rid of them. But feeling rotten: in a sense you are just feeling low and depressed.

Voice: That doesn't quite, that's just vague words...

Voice: You mean just dissatisfaction with that state?

Voice: No, it's like you are sort of travelling along quite merrily thinking that you are really quite something, that you are really quite good. And that kind of builds up and then something happens that knocks you down, you're brought face to face with who you really are. I mean you have got your good points, admittedly, but you have also got a hell of a lot not good and you suddenly realize this. And the realization is quite overwhelming.

S: But feeling rotten doesn't really convey that does it?

Voice: No.

Voice: What I immediately thought of was the thing that you were talking about before, the sort of positive sense of shame.

S: Yes, but again feeling rotten doesn't convey that.

Voice: Yes, but I think that is what I got from Chintamani saying "feeling rotten".

S: If someone came to me and said they felt rotten I would take it to mean that they were feeling rather depressed and [252] bad and that that was not a very positive state for them to be in. Not that they had suddenly seen something about themselves and were going to do something about it.

Voice: ... sort of "horror with hope".

S: Yes, a horror with hope. But if you feel rotten or say you feel rotten there doesn't seem to be that suggestion of hope.

Voice: If you really do see it, then intrinsic in that is doing something about it.

S: Yes, right. And again that doesn't seem to be the case with the word rotten. It's almost as if you accept the situation.

Voice: So that in feeling rotten you sort of start wallowing in it. Is that it?

S: Possibly. There's even maybe a touch of resentment in it. You are sort of resentful against yourself but not in a very positive way.

All right, next verse. You'll notice there is quite a bit of repetition in these verses. You notice

it more and more as we go on.

(472) In whom acquiring, cankers, all harsh speech,
Are quenched, gone to their end, and are no more,
He, lore-adept, released in every way,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: "In whom acquiring, cankers all harsh speech, are quenched, gone to their end, and are no more." Acquiring, acquisition, which is also bhava. What do you think this means?

Voice: I thought bhava was becoming.

S: Yes, but it is used here apparently in a more technical sense of acquisition, according to the little footnote here. It is not bhavasava, the asava of bhava, but bhava and asava and khara or rough speech.

Voice: Acquiring spiritual growth?[253]

S: No, it's not just that, it's acquiring in general. It refers to the general tendency that we have to collect and acquire. So why do you collect and acquire things?

Voice: To fill a hole?

S: Not just to fill the hole, I think, but to create conditions of security for yourself.

Voice: Almost reassure yourself of your own existence, in a way.

S: Yes. The acquisitions, or the bricks, as it were, with which you build up your abode, your harbour in which you can settle down safely and securely. (pause) So that in the case of the Tathagata, the Enlightened person, this tendency to collect and acquire, to accumulate, doesn't exist, because he doesn't feel insecure; he feels in fact perfectly secure within himself. And then there are asavas that we've already dealt with, and then "no harsh speech". Perhaps it's rather significant that harsh speech is particularly mentioned. What sort of harsh speech is meant here? (pause) It is speech which is intended to hurt, which is intended to wound. So these things are all gone.

"He lore-adept". "Vedagu": one who knows, one who truly knows. "Sabbadhi vippamutto": completely released, released in every way or released from all sides. Incidentally this word "release" or "freedom" in various forms, again is very, very common in the Pali texts. The state of liberation, the state of nirvana, is described as a state of freedom - vimutti or vimutta or here vipamutta, which is complete freedom. And this again is no doubt quite significant, this emphasis on spiritual freedom.

Voice: Maybe we could call ourselves a spiritual liberation front.

S: (laughs) Front?

Voice: Yes, a bit narrow though isn't it?

S: Might confuse you with the National Front. Friends [254] of liberation, friends of spiritual liberation.

Voice: I think spiritual has got the same connotation as religion.

S: Yes, very often it does have. A lot of people confuse it with spiritualistic - it doesn't mean the same thing, but quite a lot of people think it does.

Voice: What about transcendental?

S: Well I think the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has pre-empted that, he's got in first.

Voice: There's also the LSD association.

S: Yes.

Voice: There aren't any words left, we've ruined them all.

S: All right, on to the next verse then.

(473) 'Mid men of Pride, no man-of-pride himself,
Bond-overcomer who hath no bonds left,
Who understandeth ill, its base and scope,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: Yes. Actually the translator reverses the order of the lines a bit. It's the bond-overcomer comes first, he's one who has overcome all bonds, everything that binds one to samsara - the wheel of life - who has no bonds left, and who among the conceited is free of conceit. Not only that but he has known what suffering is and he has seen its base and scope, Hare says. It's ?feel, yes its ?fear.

What does it mean to know or to understand suffering? This suggests of course the four noble truths doesn't it? Dukkha, dukkha samutthi, and so on. Suffering, the cause of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering. But to understand suffering, what is meant by that do you think, to understand the truth of suffering, what is meant by that?

Voice: Seeing how it arises.[255]

S: Seeing how it arises. Does it necessarily mean actually experiencing suffering in the form of painful feelings? No, not necessarily. There is quite a bit of misunderstanding in people's minds about this Buddhist teaching, that all conditioned things are dukkha, are suffering, If you were to say this, or if you were to tell this to someone who knew nothing about Buddhism, that according to Buddhism all conditioned things were suffering, what do you think his reaction would be? How do you think he would understand that?

Voice: Quite literally, that every sensation is unpleasant. And then he'd say that that is not true because I like some things.

S: Exactly. But this is not in fact what Buddhism says. Buddhism says that there is pleasurable sensation as well as painful sensation but if you allow yourself to become attached, if you allow yourself to become neurotically attached to the pleasurable sensation, the pleasurable experience, that will result in suffering because that pleasurable sensation - or that pleasurable experience - is by its very nature impermanent, and you cannot cling on to it forever. If you try to do that you will suffer. So in this way even the pleasurable sensation - even the pleasurable experience - becomes in the long run a source of suffering, on account of your clinging and attachment and craving. But Buddhism certainly doesn't say that all sensations and all experiences are painful. But this is how people, if you are not careful, will understand it. And also Buddhism says that nothing conditioned, nothing transitory, can give you full and lasting and complete and perfect happiness. At best some measure of temporary satisfaction, even temporary happiness, temporary enjoyment, but not full, final, and complete and perfect happiness: that can only come from the unconditioned. So one has to be really careful talking to people about the Buddha's teaching of suffering.

Voice: You can also use the word "unsatisfactoriness".

S: Unsatisfactoriness, yes. (pause) All right, let's pass onto the next verse then.[256]

(474) Seer of the lone, not trusting here to hope,

Who view and lore of other men hath passed,
He in whom no supports whate'er exist,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: Here again the translator has reversed the order of the words. "Assam anissaya" comes first, which he translates as "not relying on hope". What do you think that means, that the Enlightened person does not rely upon hope? We have talked about hope already, but what is meant by relying upon hope? Relying for what or relying in what way?

Voice: Trusting in future rewards.

S: Yes, thinking in terms of the future rather than in terms of the past. Hoping that the future will make up for the present. There's a very interesting word now: "vivekadassi". Dassi means one who sees, but what is viveka? Viveka means that which is alone, that which is apart, separate, by itself, dissociated, detached. So vivekadassi means the seer of that. So Hare translates it "seer of the lone", which is not bad but it doesn't give the full meaning. So what is the lone?

Voice: Well presumably that which is beyond the ?menu of the conditioned.

S: Yes, right, beyond the ?menu of the conditioned. It is the transcendental, the unconditioned, it's nirvana. Nirvana is described as the lone, even the aloof, the separate, the dissociated, or the separated, if you like, or separate simply - the seer of the lone. Perhaps there's a suggestion also of the unique, the one, the single, the solitary. Solitary would perhaps be better, the seer of the Solitary - solitary with a capital S. There's just One thing, One with a capital O. The Neoplatonists talk about the absolute as "the one", which is not a numerical one. So seer of the Lone, seer of the Solitary, seer of the One. What sort of impression does that convey? (pause) Well it conveys an impression of detachment, concentration, of loneliness but in a very positive sense. If you are the seer of that lone in a way you are alone yourself aren't you?

Voice: It also conveys something really worthwhile, to treasure.[257]

S: Right. It's like for instance if you are digging in a mine and you just come across some enormous diamond. This one, single, solitary diamond and you are just lost in admiration of that. You are just totally preoccupied with that, you don't want anything else, you are completely satisfied with that, just that one thing - so seer of the Lone, seer of the Solitary.

"Paravediyam ditthim upativatto" which Hare translates as "who view and lore of other men hath passed". Literally the knowledge and vision of others: has passed over the knowledge and vision of others. What does that mean? It means that he knows and sees himself. He is no longer dependent upon others for his knowledge and vision. His knowledge and vision are no longer second-hand things. They are matters of first-hand personal experience, he knows and he sees for himself.

Voice: Oh I see. I took that to mean that he'd surpassed.

S: Not necessarily in the sense of knowing and seeing something better than they know and see, but for instance no longer relying upon the Buddha because you are the Buddha yourself. You don't need to take on trust what the Buddha says, even though that is a very healthy and positive thing to do. You are now the equal of the Buddha, you see for yourself, you are a Tathagatha. So the Tathagatha doesn't depend on anyone else for knowledge and vision, he has his own knowledge and vision. Indeed this is one of the characteristics of the Enlightened person, that he has everything at first hand. He gets everything at first hand, spiritually speaking; experiences everything at first hand. He doesn't have to quote from other Buddhas, he just speaks himself because he is a Buddha. I mean, Gautama the Buddha doesn't have to say such and such Buddha said so and so in such and such place. Well he might just very occasionally just to give the disciples a bit of information, but he just speaks straight out for

himself.

"Arammana yassa na santi keci". So what is arammana? It is a basis or support. "He in whom no supports whate'er exist". Who doesn't need any support? This idea also you get in the Perfection of Wisdom literature, where there is a verse which says, "that which is supported has no supports." What do you think that means? If you are supported you have no support.

Voice: You support yourself?[258]

S: If you have a support, a support which is external to you, that support can be taken away at any time. So in that sense are you supported? No. You can only be truly supported when your support is not external, when your support is within yourself. When you have no support. So that which is supported has no support, that which has no support is truly supported. That is what the Perfection of Wisdom literature says. So if you rely on something else for your happiness, peace of mind, knowledge, you can lose it any time, it can be taken away, so you are not truly supported. True support comes from within.

Sometimes people expect you to make them happy. Have you heard this expression, making someone happy? There is a story of D. H. Lawrence in which, on their wedding night, a husband went down on his knees to his wife and vowed to devote his whole life to making her happy. Do you think such a thing is possible? Can you make another human being happy?

Voices: No.

S: No you can't. You can help them to be happy themselves and in themselves. You can create favourable circumstances or provide them with facilities, but you can't yourself, by your mere presence, make them happy if they are not happy already. So if you depend for your happiness on another, you may feel all right so long as they are with you, but when they are away you feel wretched and miserable. So you must depend for your real happiness on yourself, within yourself. And then when you are happy with someone else, then that is something extra. You don't use something which is outside you as a substitute for something that we ought to be getting from within. But if you are dependent on outside support in any way then you are not supported, you have no support. So the Arahant, the Tathagata, the Enlightened person, has no support. "He in whom no supports whate'er exist." It's even "in whom", because there are no mental supports, no mental crutches even, he doesn't even need those.

There is also the suggestion of a basis or support for continued existence in the world. In other words the support for a repeated birth.

Voice: Aren't the samskaras sometimes referred to?

S: Here the word upadana is used, upadana-skandha: [259] skandhas which are the basis for clinging and hence for rebirth.

Voice: Are the basis?

S: Yes, basis for dependence. (pause)

All right let's go on.

(475) He who hath reached the yon and nigh of things,
So all are ended, quenched and are no more,
Calm man, and in attachment's end released,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: "He who has reached the yon and nigh of things". What do you think that means? Yon is what is beyond, so who has reached what is beyond and also what is near? What do you think that means?

Voice: Is it that he is able to get both into the heart of things?

S: Yes, his vision is absolutely transcendent, as it were. He's gone absolutely beyond and at the same time he is quite capable of dealing with ...

(gap in recording)

.... it suggests something like that. So, "all are ended, quenched and are no more". It's almost as though the whole distinction between the beyond and the near at hand has been abolished for him, because he himself is there. So what was formerly yonder has become near. You could say that he has reached the yon and nigh of things because what was once far away, the other side of the ocean of birth and death as it were, the other shore, has become this shore for him. The far has become the near, so he has reached the end of the far and reached the end of the near. One could look at it in this way interpreting a bit paradoxically. So "all are ended, quenched and are no more." For him there is no question any longer of yon and near - the transcendent and the immanent as it were - because he is there, the far is near the near is the far.

Voice: Is this the same as, say, the distinction between nirvana and samsara?[260]

S: Yes. In Mahayana terms, yes. There is no longer any distinction between samsara and nirvana, conditioned and unconditioned. In other words, yon and nigh, nirvana and samsara, are now for him meaningless terms because he is Enlightened, because he is the Tathagata.

Voice: And no duality either.

S: No duality therefore. See this is referred to a bit later on.

"Calm man": santo, the peaceful man. "And in attachment's end released", released through the ending of all attachment, all support, all bases, all bias. Once again the emphasis on freedom, release, emancipation. One sees here that the Buddha is getting, as it were, a bit more philosophical. Do you see this, or do you feel this? He's getting deeper and deeper. All right let's go on to the next verse.

(476) Seer of the end and term of bond and birth,
Who passion's ways hath wholly left behind,
The cleansed, the spotless, taintless, without flaw,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: So "samyojanamjatikhyantadassi", yes, who has seen the end of the bonds and of birth, who has seen the ending of the fetters and of birth. In later Pali texts there are lists of ten fetters. The same term is used: samyojana. So it is these fetters that bind one to the wheel of birth and death. So the fetters are broken and birth and death come to an end. Therefore the Buddha says here, "seer of the end of term of bond and birth," because if you see the end of the fetters - in other words if you break the fetters - you also see the end of future births and future deaths.

"Who passion's ways hath wholly left behind" the word for passion here is raga which we mentioned before.

"Suddho niddoso vimalo akaco". This is very vigorous and emphatic in Pali and Hare translates it as "the cleansed, the spotless, the taintless, without flaw". So all these words try to convey an impression of complete purity, spotlessness, freedom from all blemish.

So in this verse you get the sense of everything mundane having dropped away, all the fetters have been cast aside. There is no more birth, all the ways of passion have been left behind, while he is completely pure, he is completely spotless, completely free from taint, without any flaw, without any blemish. [261] That's the sort of impression conveyed by this verse, this is

what this verse actually says.

Voice: It's beginning to sound like a primitive or rough Heart Sutra.

S: In a way it is, yes. Strange to say there are certain sections of the Sutta Nipata - which, as I have pointed out, is a very archaic text on the whole - which do come very close to the Perfection of Wisdom. Especially one will find this if one goes into the Atthakavagga, which is the oldest section of all, the Chapter of the Eights. It comes very close to the Heart Sutra or to the Perfection of Wisdom literature generally.

Voice: What is that, the...?

S: The Atthakavagga, the Chapter of the Eights. Because all the suttas in it have eight verses each.

All right on to the next verse.

(477) He who perceiveth not self by the self,
Intent-of-mind, straight-goer, poised-of-self,
He truly still, the vital, doubt-free man,
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come.

S: We are getting into some very, sort of, difficult terms. "Yo attana 'Attanam' nanupassati": who doth not perceive the self by the self. Now what on earth does that mean? What does it mean to see the self by the self? Can you see the self by the self? How do you see the self? Do you see the self? Do you see yourself?

Voice: Self-consciousness.

S: Who sees what?

Voice: As it is translated here, "He who perceiveth not self by the self". Doesn't that imply just insight into anatta, by...

S: No, it's not "who perceiveth, not-self by the self" it's "he who perceiveth not, who does not perceive, self by the self".[262]

Voice: Oh, I see. Usually our ego considers our ego, or considers our self, as a thing.

S: Yes, right. All right, taking that as a starting point, can you therefore, can the ego see the totality of the ego?

Voice: No.

S: No. There has to be a bit left over to do the seeing. So can the self see the self?

Voice: Not in its totality.

S: No, the self can only see the not self. Subject can only see object, subject cannot see subject. So how can you know the self? You can't know the self.

Voice: That suggests in a way that you can never know nirvana either.

S: Yes, if you take nirvana in the sense of an object. But is nirvana an object?

Voice: No it's a state.

Voice: It's an experience.

S: Well you can call it a state, but then again you make it an object, even to speak about it you make it an object.

Voice: I mean if it's reality, if it's the ultimate reality, and everything is permeated with some kind of reality, then you can't say anything.

S: If everything is equally that, well you can't say anything about it can you?

Voice: If you see yourself with yourself you immediately have a sense of I. From there you can go on to say I am better than so and so, I am worse than so and so, I am clever, and build the whole thing up. But if that all breaks [263] down ... I don't know quite how to put this.

S: Well what it is really suggesting is the usual concept - or the usual situation - is of subject perceiving an object. This is the normal situation, subject perceiving object, and all our experience takes place within that framework. Either it is object and perceived by us, or it is subject and it is doing the perceiving. All right, you can turn it round to some extent and make the subject the object, but we can't do it altogether, we can't completely turn round and make the total subject an object.

Voice: You mean look within?

S: Yes, as it were, because as soon as you look within, you make what is within, without. In other words you make subject object.

Voice: It's a bit like the tongue tasting itself. It cannot.

S: Yes, right. In fact this sort of illustration is used in the Mahayana. They say the tip of the finger cannot touch itself, mind cannot perceive itself. In other words you find yourself within a sort of dualistic trap, within which self cannot know self, mind cannot know mind. So the Enlightened person, the Tathagata, is not one who perceives self by the self. He knows that that is useless. He doesn't try to do that. It means really that he has transcended the dualistic framework of the subject-object relationship. This is what it really means. In other words, strange to say, we are coming not even into the Mahayana, we are coming into the Mahamudra. This is what the Mahamudra is all about. It is very similar to the songs of Milarepa.

Voice: "The Shepherd's Search for Mind"

S: Right, yes. So, "He who perceiveth not self by the self": who does not indulge in that vain attempt, who has transcended, who has burst through the whole subject-object relationship. "Intent of mind".[264]

Voice: I see, it's sort of saying that he doesn't get caught up in that knot and therefore he has transcended the subject-object.

S: Yes. Sometimes you have to get very much caught up in the knot indeed before you can break through. And this of course is the point of many of these Zen koans. They are knots of this sort, that you can't get out of, from which you can't disentangle yourself. You just have to break through, burst through.

Voice: There's a koan here really.

S: Really, yes.

Voice: Because what we have been dealing with in this last section has been all about purification and getting rid of this and getting rid of that, and we suddenly end up with "He who perceiveth not self by the self", which is in a sense a sort of contradiction.

S: Yes, because the self can't perceive the self, and by puzzling over this and pondering over this and driving yourself silly over this you break through into another dimension, where there is no subject and no object, where there is the one Mind, capital M, which is not the object of the ordinary mind and which is not the subject, which is not of that mind itself, which transcends that distinction, that duality, and which cannot even be thought because that would be to make it an object. So that is the one Mind, just in a manner of speaking.

Voice: Is this why you get sometimes in Tibetan texts, where it talks of the yogi who no longer fears negative states of mind?

S: No, I don't think it has got anything to do with that, no. Because in this sort of case there are no bad thoughts, no negative states of mind. They are only possible within the subject-object relationship, duality. There are no positive thoughts in that sense, not to speak of negative thoughts.

So "intent of mind". This is the word we've had before, samahito, all energies fully concentrated. One could say [265] in an even higher sense, because those energies are now not locked up within the subject-object relationship. The subject-object relationship itself represents a sort of short-circuiting of energy. Your energies burst through, they break through that. I hope I am not mixing my metaphors or anything. And they become purely creative, purely expansive, transcendental.

"Straight-goer": ujjugato, they are all flowing in the same direction. So the Tathagata is one who is a straight-goer, that's an exact literal translation. Look at all these terms we are getting for the Tathagata, the Enlightened man. He is now termed the straight-goer, also the intent of mind. The man whose energies are all unified, concentrated, now straight-goer, like a river going straight to the ocean. "Poised of self", another very interesting term; thitatto: poised, established in himself, like a spear resting on a single dimensionless point. What do you pick up from this expression "poised of self"?

Voice: Centred.

S: Centred upon oneself.

Voice: In harmony.

S: In harmony, not dependent upon anything. "He truly still, the vital, doubt free man".

Voice: It's a very good juxtaposition that.

S: "Sa ve anejo akhilo akankho". Anejo: he translates that as still. It means not restless, I think. I'll look that up just to make sure... According to the dictionary it simply means free from desires. Hare translates it as "the truly still". Why do you think that is? The two are connected of course. In the Abhidharma it is said that one of the characteristics of emotivity in the ordinary sense is restlessness. If you are free from desires you are still. If you are full of desires you are restless. So all right, that will do.

"The vital, doubt-free man." This word "vital" actually it is a very good translation but not quite, in a sense, faithful to the original. The original is "akhilo". Khila is a very interesting term, it means something like stiff. There is a whole sutta [266] in the Madhyamika dealing with this subject. Akhila means not stiff, which means loosened up, alive, lively, hence vital. Let me see what it says under the heading khila, because it is a very interesting term. Khila is waste or fallow land, barrenness of mind, mental obstruction: a state of mental constipation or spiritual constipation, you could almost say. You are dried up, barren, you are in the wasteland, as it were, unproductive, obstructed, constipated - khila. So akhila means to be just the opposite of that, loosened up, open, productive, flowing, free, alive, vital. So akhila therefore is a very important term. So the Tathagata is like that, he is not barren, not fallow, he is lively, productive, flowing, free, open, unobstructed. "Akhilo akankho": akankho is free

from doubt. Doubt is of course one of the nivaranas, one of the hindrances. But how is the Tathagata free from doubt? Well he is free from doubt because he knows, obviously. (pause)

All right let's go on to the final verse of the Buddha's description of the Tathagata.

(478) He with no room for error whatsoever,
The seer of knowledge as to all that is,
He who his final body beareth now,
Won to the full awakening, utter bliss,
(Such is the cleansing of that spirit here)
Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come!

S: This is quite a powerful verse. "Mohantara yassa na santi keci". It's not exactly error, it's moha: mental confusion, bewilderment - as in dosa and moha. This word moha is a really difficult, untranslatable term. It's a sort of mental stupefaction, bewilderment and confusion, turmoil. It's not just ignorance, not just error. So, he in whom there is no room for moha.

"Sabbesu dhammesu ca nanadassi": who is the seer of knowledge of all there is. Sabbesu dhammesu: amongst, or in the midst of, all dharmas - dharmas in the sense of things, phenomena, appearances - who in respect of all things, all appearances, all phenomena, knows and sees them according to reality. This again is very important from a Mahayana point of view. The Mahayana speaks in terms of understanding the true nature of all dharmas: sarvadharmas: realizing, seeing that all dharmas are sunyata.

"He who his final body beareth now" - which has been mentioned before - who will not be reborn.[267]

"Patto Sambodhim anuttaram sivam" - who has attained to, who has reached, supreme Enlightenment, sambodhi, and sivam it should be: supreme, perfect Enlightenment. Sambodhi we can say is perfect Enlightenment, and then anuttaram sambodhi, which is supreme perfect Enlightenment, and sivam. Sivam means a state of happiness and bliss and auspiciousness. It's the name, of course, of a Hindu god also, but here occurs simply as an adjective. And then in brackets: "ettavata yakkhassa suddhi", which is quite interesting. Such is the cleansing of that spirit. What is the word for spirit? It is yakkha, and what is a yakkha, a yaksha?

Voice: A natural force, being, a natural spirit...

S: Yes. A yaksha was a sort of deity, a popular deity in the Buddha's time, usually regarded as a sublime terrifying sort of spirit. You may remember the Buddha denied that he was a yaksha - the brahman was so impressed, so overwhelmed, by his appearance that among other things he thought he might be a yaksha [Anguttara Nikaya 4.36, tr.]. There was a whole yaksha cult in India in the Buddha's time. The word really should be demigod. A yakkha is a sort of demigod, a heroic spirit, rather sublime, rather terrifying. So here the Buddha applies the word yakkha to the Tathagata himself. We know incidentally that some of the early Buddha images were modelled upon yakkha images. That those were the images of the Buddha that represent him as a very powerful, strongly built figure - very impressive, very dignified, very sublime. So what is the significance of the Buddha here using this symbolic and poetic term yakkha to describe the Tathagata? (pause) Of course he is not saying that the Buddha is literally a yakkha, he is using it symbolically and poetically. He is suggesting he is something sublime, almost terrifying, something uncanny, out of this world, very impressive, very dignified, very majestic, overwhelming.

And "Oblation-worthy is the Man-thus-come". So it is significant, interesting, that he concludes his description of the Tathagata in this way. He works up to this tremendous climax: one in whom there is no moha, one who sees the true nature of all things, who wears his last body, who has attained to complete perfect Enlightenment, who is utterly happy. Then, he says, such is the cleansing of that yaksha. So he has to fall back on poetry, as it

were, to try and convey the [268] right impression. And it is to this Tathagata that the offering should be made, he is worthy of the offering. You certainly don't get any impression of gentle Buddha meek and mild or anything of that sort do you? (laughter)

I think we'll close there. We have at least finished this description of the Buddha, the Tathagata who truly deserves the brahman's offering, the Enlightened man.

So having gone through the whole thing now, what sort of general impression do you get from this description of the Tathagata, which is after all the spiritual ideal of archaic Buddhism? That is what is being presented here. So what sort of impression do you get?

Voice: Pretty far out.

Voice: Descriptions in every direction.

Voice: Many coloured.

Voice: It's so big, it completely obliterates...

Voice: It's like every area has been covered by the whole.

S: But there is this very noticeable fact that it is, as it were, non-religious. A lot of things which would be regarded in the Christian West as essential to the conception of the perfect man are completely omitted, are just not there at all. Especially the more emotional side, there's nothing about humility or love. That is, as it were, taken for granted. That will follow. There is not even anything said about compassion. There is a great deal of emphasis on knowledge and freedom and liberation and integrity and integration, harmony and balance. These seem to be the emphases.

Voice: It's all things that one can see at one's own stage apart perhaps from the self by the self bit. All the rest one can relate to.

S: Well the not the self by the self bit is the most far out bit of all, you could say. (laughter)

Voice: Do any suttas stress compassion?

S: Not stress. It's mentioned, certainly, but there isn't a great stress apart from the Mahayana sutras.[269]

Voice: This is presumably why Buddhism is known as the religion of wisdom, rather than the religion of emotion.

S: But you also get from this description, for want of a better word, a humanistic impression, though it is very far out, although it does go beyond and has that strong transcendental element aspect, but it is at the same time humanly intelligible, in a way.

Voice: Each individual thing one can relate to, even if the whole is a bit mind boggling.

S: Yes. ..(unclear).. freedom from attachment, surely, freedom from conditioning. You know that this in the case of the Buddha is carried to the nth degree, and one's own is carried to a very tiny, a very limited degree. But there is the point of connection to one's own experience, however limited.

Voice: It's as if it covers the distance from any human condition, right up to Enlightenment.

S: So it is a very positive and powerful statement of the ideal. In this chapter so far we've got the glimpse of the Buddha before his Enlightenment, when he has just gone forth. Then at the time of his Enlightenment, the time of his conquest of Mara, then one's attention is drawn to

the importance of perfect speech. And then one is plunged straight into a delineation of the ultimate spiritual ideal, that is the ideal of the Tathagata via a repudiation of ethnic religion. So this is as far as one has got and we are going to hear a bit more, we haven't quite finished this sutta.

(next day)

S: So the brahman Bharadvaja was looking for someone to receive the remnants of the sacrifice, someone worthy to receive that, and he found the Buddha. At the back of the brahmin's mind of course there was a certain idea of worthiness based on his own caste prejudices and ethnic ideologies. But the Buddha, in the course of the main part of this sutta, shows him a much higher ideal, a truly spiritual ideal, and suggests that this sort of person is the one who is truly worthy to receive offerings.[270]

So this is as far as we've got and we go on with the story, as it were, and the brahmin speaks again.

(479) Then is my offering true offering,
For we have found the type, the lore-adept!
Brahma is my witness! Sir, receive from me,
Eat, sir, this sacrificial offering!

S: But what does the Buddha say?

(480) Not mine t'enjoy fare won from chanting hymns;
'Tis not the thing for seers, O brahmana!
Fare won from chanting hymns the Wake reject;
Where Dharma reigns this, brahman, is the rule.

(481) Nay, thou must offer other food and drink
To a great rishi wholly consummate,
The cankerless, untroubled man of calm:
Sure field is that for merit-seeking man!

S: All right let's go into that. So what is the Buddha doing in his reply? He is rejecting the brahmin's offering, and quite decisively. He doesn't give exactly reasons for this but he does say, "not mine t'enjoy fare won from chanting hymns, 'Tis not the thing for seers, O brahmana! Fare won from chanting hymns the Wake", that is to say the Buddhas, the Enlightened Ones, "where Dharma reigns this, brahman, is the rule." Why do you think the Buddha says that, why do the Enlightened not accept food which is won from the chanting of hymns?

Voice: Because there is no value in it.

S: But it is food.

Voice: Presumably it would be an act of encouragement to a specifically ethnic religious practice.

S: Yes, it seems more like that. There is not only that aspect, but there is also the aspect that presumably the brahmin makes his living from the performance of such ceremonies. So from the Buddhist point of view, perhaps, it should be regarded as wrong livelihood. So the Buddha rejects any food which is the by-product of wrong livelihood, which has of course all sorts of implications. It is rather interesting that the Buddha doesn't reject the offering of - what was her name - Amarapali, but he rejects the offering of the brahmin. True, Amarapali was following what [271] might be considered a wrong way of life, you know, she was making a living by entertaining gentlemen at her beautiful house which had been provided by the town council for that purpose. The Buddha didn't refuse her offering. But in the case of

the brahmin, presumably the offering and everything that had made that offering possible was bound up with quite a lot of wrong belief, of miccha-ditthi, which presumably he did not want to encourage. So he rejects the brahmin's offering.

Also the brahmin seems to be entertaining a misunderstanding, because he says in his reply, "then is my offering true offering, for we have found the type, the lore-adept! Brahma is my witness, sir, receive from me, eat, sir, this sacrificial offering." Though no doubt he has been very impressed by what the Buddha says, he still regards the ideal put forward by the Buddha as a fulfilment of his own ethnic ideal, and wants to make the offerings appropriate to that. In other words although he's certainly sympathetic to what the Buddha says, he's taken it in to some extent, but he is still looking at it very much in the light of what he already believes and accepts. He thinks that the Buddha is still describing the brahmin who is a worthy recipient of that particular kind of offering, whereas in fact the Buddha has ceased to describe that kind of person, that kind of ideal. He is describing an ideal which infinitely transcends anything that the brahmin had imagined. But the brahmin is still continuing with his customary offerings.

Voice: As the Buddha encourages him to do.

S: In a sense as the Buddha encourages him to do. But now the Buddha is beginning to make that decisive break, and he says this kind of offering is not appropriate because you are not concerned any more simply with someone who fulfils your brahminic ideals; you are concerned with someone who is infinitely more than that, the Tathagata, with an Enlightened One who has nothing to do with offerings of that sort, nothing to do with that whole sacrificial system, nothing to do with your whole ethnic outlook. And he rejects his offering.

We get a parallel, in a way, to this sort of thing, when Buddhism, to use that unfortunate term, comes west - in other words with regards to people's attitude towards the Buddha himself. They want to see the Buddha in terms of what they already think and what they already believe. And this was certainly very [272] evident towards the end of the last century when some knowledge about Buddhism and the Buddha started filtering through: the way people looked at the Buddha. If you read some of the early, quite old books about the Buddha and his teaching, including - or especially - those which are sympathetic, you find very often that the authors are looking at the Buddha very much in terms of Christ and the life of Christ, which produces quite a bit of distortion, very often. Do you see what I mean? Perhaps they couldn't look at him to begin with in any other sort of way, but eventually you have to start looking at the Buddha in the Buddha's own terms, or seeing the Buddha through the eyes of the Buddha. So the brahmin could not but do this at the beginning, to see the Buddha - to see the Tathagata - as simply the kind of person who was a suitable recipient of that kind of offering. But eventually the Buddha helps him to get beyond that point of view, and see the Tathagata as Tathagata, to see the Buddha as Buddha.

Let's go through these verses in a bit more detail. The brahmin says, "my offering is a true offering", I'm making my offering to the right person. So, "for we have found the type, the lore-adept!" In other words the vedagunam. He thinks he has found someone who lives up to his brahminic ideals, and therefore he is more than ever convinced that he should make his offering to the Buddha, that his sacrificial offering should be given to the Buddha.

But then the Buddha says, "Not mine to enjoy fare won from chanting hymns". Oh there is one other little point: he says, "Brahma be my witness." Why do you think he says Brahma be my witness? [273] Brahma is one of the Vedic gods. The brahmin seems to have a special connection with Brahma. Brahma was the creator. Brahma was the original progenitor of the human race and of the brahmins themselves. Brahma was a sort of priestly figure, a sort of God the father figure, and Brahma was especially connected with the whole sacrificial system. So he says "Brahma be my witness", as if to say Brahma be my witness that you are the right person to receive this offering. But then the Buddha completely repudiates the offering, and he goes on to say, "Nay, thou must offer other food and drink to a great rishi wholly consummate, the cankerless untroubled man of calm: sure field is that for merit-seeking man." In other words he is not discouraging all offerings, but only that

particular kind of offering, with its sacrificial ethnic implications.

Voice: So offer him food and drink, so long as it is not ceremonial?

S: In a way, yes, at least as long as it is not left over from a sacrifice of that type. We are not told of course what. We are not told in detail about the sacrifice. It could have included the sacrifice of animals, which the Buddha certainly would not have approved of, but sacrifices were very common, we know. In fact in other portions of the Pali texts there are descriptions of these sacrifices, the fear and terror of animals who were going to be slaughtered. So if it was such a sacrifice certainly the Buddha wouldn't have wanted anything to do with it. But even if it was not a sacrifice of that sort, even if it was only a sacrifice which involved pouring the clarified butter into a sacred fire, still it was bound up with all sorts of beliefs and practices and customs of which he didn't approve, with which he didn't agree, so he would want nothing at all to do with it.

Annena ca kevalinam mahesim
khinasavam kukkucavupasantam

Here the Buddha is adding a few more extracts to the description of the perfect man, the Enlightened man, the Tathagata. He says, "Offer something else to the kevalin." What is the kevalin? What is kevala or Kyvolia? This is another quite difficult but quite important word. Kevala is something like free, something like liberated, but also, as it were, separated. We had a word like that yesterday: viveka, the sole, the solitary. Kyvolia is quite an [274] archaic word - not only in Buddhism but in Jainism and Vedic Hinduism - for the state of liberation. It's freedom, detachment, but also sort of solitariness, aloneness, dissociation. It's used very much by the Jains; they used this term. So the kevalin is one who has reached this state. So the Buddha says, "To one who is a kevalin", to one who is free, detached, liberated, aloof, one who is "mahesim". Mahesim means something like a sage, one who is wise, one who is khinasavam, in whom the asravas, the poisons, have all dried up. We talked about this yesterday. One who is consummate, who is completely Enlightened, something else, another kind of offering you must make to him. And if you make that offering he is a field, a field of merit, for that offering. Are you familiar with this? Field of merit, the word for field is ksetra or khetta. That is, if you plant a seed in a field it springs up; in the same way if you perform an action, a good action with regard to a certain person, that person is your field of merit, in as much as from the performance of that good action with regard to that person a certain amount of merit will accrue to you. Do you get the idea? But then there's a further development: the more meritorious the person, the greater the merit that will accrue to you and also the greater the demerit if you do anything against that person. So therefore it says that the best field of merit is the Buddha himself, because any offering made to the Buddha has a far greater fruit, far greater result. So any offence committed against the Buddha personally produces far greater demerit. Why do you think this is? What is the principle behind this?

Voice: If you offer something to someone who is meritorious, presumably you've seen that in them and therefore the feeling is greater.

S: Yes, the feeling is greater, you are more inspired, yes.

Voice: And vice versa: if you can harm a Buddha then you must be really rather sick.

S: Yes. If you just don't know, you don't recognize, that someone is a Buddha and you perform a bad action with regard to them, presumably then that is not demeritorious. Some texts might say that it still was demeritorious but perhaps that is more by way of [275] stressing the greatness and importance of the Buddha and maybe not to be taken too literally. This is not unconnected with the idea that any act of violence against your parents is more serious than an act of violence against other persons because to bring yourself to that point you will have had to overcome all your natural affection, as it were, towards your parents. So it represents a much greater violation of natural feeling.

So the Buddha is not discouraging the brahmin from making an offering, but he wants him to make the right sort of offering, the offering which is in keeping with the nature of the ideal, which is in keeping with the Buddha's own nature. And he points out that an offering made to the Buddha is very fruitful, or will be very fruitful, because the Buddha is the supreme field of merit. The Buddha is the best possible person to whom offerings can be made, but they must be the right sort of offerings.

But the brahmin is still obsessed with the idea of his sacrificial offerings, so what does he go on to say?

(482) Brahman: "Well is it sir, that thuswise I should know!
But who should eat the gift of such as I,
Which at this sacrifice I seek to give?
Thy bidding, sir, I would obtain herein."

S: So the brahmin says, "Well is it, sir, that thuswise should I know." It is very good that I should know this, that I should know that this kind of offering is inappropriate to you. But who should eat the gift? Please tell me this? I would like to learn this from you. Here I am with this oblation in my hand, I've got to give it to somebody, to whom shall I give it? I accept that I cannot give it to you, you require another kind of offering. But there is this oblation in my hand, please tell me to whom I'm to give it then.

Voice: He's attached.

S: Yes, he's still attached, he's still thinking in those sorts of terms. Any real Buddhist would throw away the oblation, throw away all the sacrificial apparatus, forget all about it. But he can't do that. He's seen the greatness of the Buddha. He's in a way accepted the spiritual ideal that the Buddha has put forward, but he's still bothered about what to do with the sacrificial offering. He is by no means completely free from the preoccupation with those [276] ethnic ideals and practices, which he is now rapidly outgrowing, as a result of his contact with the Buddha. So what does the Buddha say?

(483) Him th'unprovokable,
Him of unclouded mind,
Freed of all lustfulness,
Void of all indolence,
(484) Guide of those on the brink,
Master of birth-and-death,
Type of the silent sage,
Perfect in silent lore,
Come to the sacrifice:
(485) Him with thy brows unknit
Venerate with joined hands,
Worship with food and drink,
Thus prosper holy gifts.

S: So what is the Buddha in effect saying? Does he answer the brahmin's question?

Voice: Not really.

S: No he doesn't at all.

Vimalamitra: He seems to suggest, in a way, come to the sacrifice.

S: No, that refers to himself who has come to the sacrifice.

Ratnapani: He ignores it as the trivia that it is and carries on with what is important.

S: He ignores it, yes. He says in effect, just forget all about giving the sacrificial oblation to somebody, he says just venerate the Buddha. "Venerate with joined hands, worship with food and drink." In other words with the appropriate offerings, "thus prosper holy gifts." He's just saying, "Yes, well forget about making your sacrificial offering, forget all about finding someone to give it to, just venerate the Buddha, just make the right offerings to him, forget about everything else." So how does he describe the Buddha? [277] How does he describe the Enlightened one? How does he describe himself? "Him the unprovokable, him of unclouded mind." Let's see what that is in Pali.

"Sarambha yassa vigata, cittam yassa anavilam"

Unprovokable, one who cannot be incited to become angry or quarrelsome, whose mind is completely unclouded, not besmeared, "vippamutto ca kamehi," free from all craving, free from all desire. "thinam yassa panuditam". "Thinam" is quite an important word that we haven't had yet. You remember the five hindrances? Remember what they are? The five hindrances to meditation? Is this familiar ground for most people? Because kamacchanda, the first, what is that? It means urge towards sense experience. I think we should go into this a little bit. Although I've mentioned it in a few lectures, it's something one should have as it were, at your fingertips. If you want to get into a dhyanic state you have first of all to overcome five hindrances. That is to say if those five hindrances are present you cannot go into a dhyanic state, yes? So, therefore, many of the texts speak in terms of the overcoming of the five hindrances. The term for hindrance is nivarana. Are you familiar with that term, nivarana? The five nivaranas? Nivarana means not just hindrance but covering obscuration. So the first is kamacchanda. "Chanda" means urge. It's a strong word. Kamacchanda means something like urge in the direction of sense experience. So one can see the relation of this particular hindrance to meditation, to the dhyana state, quite clearly. That if you are trying to get into a dhyana state, which is on a higher level, on a higher plane than sense experience, and if your mind is constantly turning in the direction of sense experience, if it's got a very strong craving for sense experience, you won't be able to get into a dhyanic state. Have you noticed that? Supposing for instance you are hungry so you keep on turning over and over in your mind the thought of food, sort of mentally savouring the taste of food. In that case your mind is turned toward sense experience. You won't be able to get into the dhyana state. So long as you are bringing to mind sense experiences that you had in the past and savouring them over again and relishing them in the mind, by anticipating them you won't be able to get into the dhyana state. So for it to be possible for you to get into the dhyana state, you have to be turned away from all preoccupation with sense experience, or experience on the sense plane, whether [278] to the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, or even through the lower mind. Do you see what this hindrance means? In other words for it to be possible for you to get into the dhyana states (the first dhyana to begin with) there must be no preoccupation with sense objects. The mind which is preoccupied with sense objects is not on the dhyana plane.

Voice: In a way, the one who is thinking about the one who is meditating...

S: You can't even be thinking about that particular hindrance and overcoming it, because once you have overcome it you just forget all about it. So for it to be possible for you to get into that dhyana state there must be no thought of any sight or sound or taste or smell or touch, and no tendency of the mind, at least for the time being, to go in the direction of any of those things or turn towards any of those things. You must be able to completely forget about them, and in fact you find that if you get deeply into meditation, or at least concentrated, if you are absorbed, there's no consciousness of sense objects except in a very vague and distant sort of way. You might even hear a sound in the distance, but the mind doesn't turn towards it. It's that turning of the mind towards the sense object that gets in the way, yes? The mind isn't interested in that particular object.

Voice: Then if you try to, or if you maintain a kind of dhyanic state even when you come out of meditation, then how does that affect your sense perception?

S: It doesn't affect your sense perception. You will see objects, but your mind will not be

turning towards them in the same way, not interested in them in the same way, not latching onto them in the same way. They will just be there. Yes? You notice when you are deeply thinking about things, you might be sitting in the garden and you see the trees and you see the flowers but the mind is not turning towards them, the mind is not particularly interested. They're just there because you are mentally preoccupied with something else, maybe something quite different. In fact you find this when you have had a good meditation and you just come out and walk about; your mind doesn't turn towards anything for a while, your mind doesn't [279] take an interest in anything for a while. It's quite, as it were, content within itself. External things don't attract it even though you can see them, hear them, and smell them, you can taste them when you start eating, but the mind doesn't really turn towards them.

Vimalamitra: You still experience them.

S: You still experience them.

Voice: But there's no inclination to...

S: There's no inclination to, yes.

Voice: I often wondered about that. I've got this kind of feeling that as soon as you come out of meditation you ought to be in contact.

S: Well there's no question of ought to be in contact because you are in contact by virtue of the fact that you perceive. You see the forms, you hear the sounds, but your mind doesn't incline towards them, there's no inclination on the part of your mind towards them, it's not interested in them, it doesn't take them up, it doesn't latch onto them. That only happens gradually as you get, as it were, out of meditation. So long as you are actively preoccupied with, interested in, inclined towards, sense objects you can't get into the dhyana state. So for this reason the kamachanda is said to be a hindrance to meditation in the sense of absorption in the dhyana states. You have at least for the time being to turn aside from your preoccupation with those things. Do you see that? It's not a question of saying, "Well that sort of preoccupation is bad or wicked." It just pertains to a particular plane. If you want to get onto another plane - the next highest plane as represented by a dhyana state - then you have to cease to preoccupy yourself with the objects which belong to the lower plane, otherwise you can't get onto the higher plane. So this is the first of the five hindrances, kamachanda.

Voice: How does this relate to the four stages of the mindfulness of breathing? When you're concentrating on that [280] point on the tip of your nose or wherever, you're experiencing that sensation. If you're experiencing that sensation are you still not in a dhyanic state?

S: You're not fully in a dhyanic state so long as you experience that sensation.

Voice: That's the jumping point.

S: Yes, that's the jumping point. You've brought all your sense experience to one fine point, yes? So the thing to do then is forget about that point but retain the concentration on the point, if you see what I mean. After a while when you are deeply into that you just don't perceive the breath at all. The point vanishes, you may go on breathing very faintly or you may not, but even if you are you don't notice it. There's no point perceived, the breath has, as it were, disappeared, but you remain suspended in that state of concentration. That particular object, i.e. the fine point of the breathing, has disappeared but your concentration doesn't disappear with it. You're left concentrated. All right, what's the next of the hindrances after kamachanda?

Chintamani: Anger and hatred.

S: Anger and hatred. What's the Pali word here? It's vyapada, which means extreme anger and hatred and antagonism. So it's quite obvious that as long as your mind is occupied by thoughts

of anger and hatred you can't get into a dhyana state. Maybe there's nothing so inimical to a dhyana state as a feeling of anger and resentment and hatred. If just before you sit someone has annoyed or irritated you, your mind continues to be preoccupied with that; you can't possibly get into a dhyana state. Has anyone ever had this sort of experience?

Voices: Yes.

S: You just can't get it off your mind. Your mind keeps running over it, "He did this to me, he said this to me. He behaved in such and such a way or he was in such and such a way. He doesn't even need to do or say anything, it's just the way he is." (laughter) One whom you intensely dislike. So [281] if you allow your mind to run in this way you don't get into a dhyana state. So this vyapada is a hindrance. This is pretty obvious isn't it? So this is when the metta bhavana comes in useful. Sometimes you might have to do the metta bhavana just to counteract these sort of feelings of anger and hatred so that you can get into the dhyana states. Sometimes the mindfulness of breathing doesn't help you very much here because you keep being dragged away from your concentration by your strong feelings of anger and hatred, resentment and irritation.

Voice: I find it quite good to just kind of accept that in the world you're liable to come against aggravations and things. It's just part of being in the world.

S: Yes, you just got in his way.

Voice: Yes.

S: All right, so that's vyapada. Then after vyapada there's thina-middha, and it's with thina that we are really concerned; this is where it all started from. We've come against this word thina.

Voice: What does it translate as?

S: The Buddha is described as "thinam yassa panuditam" which Hare renders as "void of all indolence". Thina is usually translated as sloth-and-torpor. Thina is said to be more mental; middha is said to be more physical. Middha or torpor is the state you get into after you've had a very heavy meal, maybe with a bit of alcohol. It's a very hot day so the state that you then get into is one of torpor. Then mental equivalent of that is sloth. So sloth and torpor.

Voice: Is there a connection between sloth and torpor and the lack of energy that arises through conflict. Or is that something different?

S: No, I think that is something different. That is more like khila, the state of barrenness and stultification that we talked about yesterday.[282] So indolence: perhaps it's very difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the two. Why are you indolent? It may be due to the fact of internal conflict, or it may be something else, just some general sort of heaviness. So sloth and torpor covers everything like drowsiness, sleepiness, indolence, lack of energy, lack of effort. You know quite well when you get into that sort of state you can't meditate, can you? You know the sort of state that is implied here? It's not very bright, not very wakeful, a bit dull, heavy, stagnant, torpid, like a boa constrictor after an enormous meal. So what happens in this sort of state? Why do you get into this sort of state? It may be due to quite simple reasons. You may have had a very heavy meal just before you were going to meditate, so naturally you feel a bit heavy. Some people can break through that, others can't. This is one of the reasons why one is advised not to have a heavy meal before meditation. But barring that, supposing you haven't had a heavy meal, supposing it isn't a very hot day, supposing you haven't been working hard and you're tired. What brings about sloth and torpor? Why is one indolent? Why doesn't one make an effort? Why isn't one buoyant and lively?

Voice: The energy gets blocked.

S: The energy gets blocked. Do you think it is just blocked energy? And if so, why does the energy get blocked? In the case of sloth and torpor, it's not so much that the energy is blocked, or gets blocked, it's more that the energy doesn't move. In a way this is the whole point of sloth and torpor, the energy is not blocked, but it doesn't move, one could say.

Voice: There's no desire or will for the energy to move, more like laziness.

S: It's more like laziness but, as I sometimes say, what is laziness? It's easy to say that someone is lazy, but what is laziness?

Devamitra: Well, it implies to me that someone who is lazy is someone who has got the energy available but won't apply it.[283]

S: But why won't he?

Voice: There's no reason to.

S: There's no reason to.

Devamitra: Lack of inspiration.

S: Lack of inspiration, lack of interest. It's more like that.

Voice: Half-heartedness.

S: Half-heartedness, you feel this in connection with meditation when maybe it hasn't been going all that well and you begin to feel or to think that perhaps there's not much point in it all. You don't feel much zest, much interest. Then you get all sluggish and torpid and lazy.

Voice: I think this also seems to come hand in hand with kind of happiness... Like at Sukhavati, sometimes it's good to go out to see a film if you're getting dull, or do something creative or something you know will get some energy moving.

S: Yes.

Voice: You see in the zoo, wild animals who have been caged for many years. They look completely drained of energy.

S: But also I think one must be careful when one speaks of laziness to be sure that it really is laziness that one is talking about. For instance, you might be a very busy, active person, doing all sorts of things. Somebody else might not be doing anything. Apparently, so far as you are concerned, you might think that that person is very lazy. Would this necessarily be justified?

Voice: No.[284]

S: No. He might not be choosing to do anything, certainly not the things that you are doing. He might just be quiet. He might just be thinking, not necessarily lazy. So laziness, real genuine laziness, seems to be a sort of by-product of lack of interest, lack of enthusiasm, lack of inspiration, lack of zest, lack of liveliness. I think probably this is one of the great difficulties on the whole spiritual life. This is why I was talking about even the place of pleasure in the spiritual life yesterday, just to keep you a bit alive, a bit interested in things, a bit happy as it were. Otherwise it becomes very difficult.

Ratnapani: ... also lack of confidence, which makes some people lazy because they don't feel they can do something, so they do nothing.

S: Yes, in a way a lack of faith in the sense of sradha. Where there is faith there will be energy. So that's thina middha, and what's the opposite?

Voice: Worry and flurry.

S: Yes, uddhacca-kukkucca, sometimes translated as hurry and flurry or worry and flurry. It's mental restlessness or mental instability and physical restlessness, excitability, flightiness.

Devamitra: It sounds very like it.

S: Thina-middha sounds quite stagnant. So also if you are very restless, very excited, then also you can't meditate can you? Have you experienced this?

Voice: Frequently.

S: So this also is a nivarana, a hindrance, an obstacle, to meditation. You have to get this out of the way. And then fifthly and lastly vicikiccha. This is usually translated as doubt, but it's a bit more than doubt: it's more like indecision, lack of commitment, lack of faith - it's when you don't have full confidence in what you are doing. How can you [285] really do something wholeheartedly if you don't have full confidence in what you are doing, or in yourself as doing it? If you start thinking, "Oh I don't know why I am doing this, don't know why I am sitting here trying to meditate," well you probably won't have a good meditation. (laughter)

Voice: The last three seem very closely related. They seem to overlap. Because I find if I sit in a sort of restless state of mind there comes a very brief period of calm followed by a torpid period. I find one sort of gradually slides into the other.

Voice: It's almost like little stages. I've noticed that. You can sit and do all these different kinds of manifestation of... and the same kinds of difficulties come up.

S: So to put it all in positive terms, when you sit to meditate, first of all your mind must be firmly turned away from all the sense objects. You must be in a state of positive good will towards everybody, you must feel light and buoyant and fresh and energetic. At the same time you should be calm and peaceful and very confident with regard to what you are about to do, and about your spiritual life in general. If you can fulfil these conditions then you will find it relatively easy (laughter) to get into a dhyanic state, in fact you will gradually be in a dhyanic state.

Voice: That's the irony, isn't it? You've got to be like that to get like that and we do it to get like that anyway, we do our practice.

S: Little by little, yes?

Voice: Actually I never thought of applying confidence to all of that in terms of my practice.

S: It's more like confidence in the sense of wholeheartedness. Do you see what I mean?

Voice: Yes.[286]

S: It's very important that when you sit, you sit down with a real determination that I'm going to do something with this half hour, or this hour; something is going to really happen; this is a piece of work that I've got to get on with. You sort of tackle it quite vigorously, as it were.

Ratnapani: This is the one thing that is opposed to the "should-ing" as well, isn't it? This should be done. I should get this much together.

S: Yes, quite. You feel interested, you feel enthusiastic. This is why Zen, for instance, speaks in terms of "beginner's mind". Because most people, the first time they try meditation or a particular method of meditation, they were very interested, maybe a bit enthusiastic, even if it was simply because it was a new thing, something not done before. The chances are that they will get on with it relatively well, so that same sort of interest one should bring to every

session because, in fact, every session is new, no two sessions are ever the same. So one should try to think not that this is the same old meditation all over again: "Here we are sitting in the same old place, same old cushions, same old people, same old practice." So think that this is completely different, completely new. These are fresh, unique, situations.

Voice: How do you, why do you get like that?

S: Why do you?

Voice: Is it that you get in your head more, in a kind of mental way of looking at it?

S; Isn't this something we do sort of generally, but again why do we do it?

Voice: We're looking for experience I suppose, thirsting for excitement.[287]

S: It means we're not looking at things as they actually are at this moment. We're bringing recollections from the past.

Voice: ... tendency to solidify everything around one... solid concepts and ideas and things like possessions, in fact.

S: Yes.

Chintamani: There's also the point that whenever one of these hindrances or one of these negativities comes up, it tends to drag all the rest with it.

S: Anyway, this all arose out of a consideration of "thina", the Buddha being void of all indolence, void of all laziness. "Guide of those on the brink." This is quite interesting: those on the brink, those at the limit. He is guide of those on the brink or at the limit. What do you think is meant by that? What is that brink, what is that limit?

Voice: Our conditioned existence.

S: According to the commentary, it means those with passions. But that doesn't seem altogether satisfactory. One could look at it in various ways. Those who are on the brink, about to topple over the precipice of conditioned existence, in other words, those who are ready for something more, something further, something beyond, or those who are on the brink in the sense of being constantly in a state of peril - because in the world, in the midst of conditioned existence, you are in a very precarious situation, you're not really safe, you're not really secure. You may think you are, but actually you're on the brink, you're at the edge. All the time, you may fall over. Any time you may fall into suffering, any time you may fall into sickness, you may fall into death. You're on the brink all the time. All the time you're in a sort of existential situation, though you very often don't know it. So you're on the brink all the time. So the Buddha is the guide to those on the brink. It seems to mean something more like this. Yes? They are on the brink, of course, because of their passions, but simply to say those who are on the brink are those with passions doesn't bring out the meaning very fully or very powerfully. So one is constantly on the brink.

Devamitra: It's like, in a sense, Shantideva's case, his preoccupation as if he were personally continually on the brink.

S: You feel that very strongly with Shantideva. But therefore, as you say, there is that sense of urgency. Anything may happen to you any minute. You may fall as it were straight down into hell. So what are you going to do about it? So the Buddha is the guide to people in that sort of situation, or who feel in that sort of situation. Milarepa felt very much on the brink because he had [288] committed all those evil deeds. He brought about the deaths of all those people through black magic, so he knew that if he were to die he would just go straight down into hell and suffer for aeons and aeons. So what was he going to do? He was on the brink in a

really desperate sort of situation and then he found Marpa, and Marpa showed him the way. But there was only one way for him by that time, well it would just have to be Buddhahood: all or nothing, Enlightenment or hell. Those were the alternatives before Milarepa. Yes? He really was on the brink - and he knew it and Marpa knew it.

Devamitra: A very positive situation actually, to know one's on the brink.

S: Yes. In a way it is, because it does galvanize one's energies. Just as in time of war everybody perks up. I remember this, it's really amazing. I remember the declaration of war, I think it was 11.00 on the morning of the, I think it was, 9 September 1939 and the air raid sirens started blowing, yes? Everybody sort of perked up. Everybody sort of came to life after the uncertainty of the previous year, whether there was going to be war or not. Now it was war, it had a kind of galvanizing and invigorating effect upon lots of people. After some months when nothing seemed to happen, they got a bit dull and lethargic again. Everybody perked up at the time of the blitz. (laughter) It may sound strange but this is what sort of happened. Lots of elderly men really came to life during that time. They never enjoyed themselves so much. Despite all the disaster, despite all the hardships, in a way they never enjoyed themselves so much, and you could see that. They got out of the rut, away from their wives and families.

They were almost enjoying the war, you could say. They had something to live for. Not just something to fight for, but something to live for almost.

Voice: Otherwise, why all the memoirs, the films, the recollections and all the rest of it.

Voice: Jolly good fun.

S: Yes, yes.

Voice: People had to become efficient.

S: People had to become efficient - wanted to become efficient. There was a reason for being efficient. There was a definite objective to win the war and this was very, very strong among people. If you have a definite objective in which you are really interested, that means something to you, you'll be galvanized into activity, otherwise not. So, even a worldly objective like winning a war can galvanize you into activity. What about winning Enlightenment then? That should galvanize you into activity even more so. But if you can't quite think in those sort of sublime terms, then at least think in terms of some general spiritual progress, evolutionary development, helping to create better conditions [289] for other people. At least think in those sort of terms, because everybody is on the brink really. Very often they don't know it, they just sort of sleep on the brink. They feel so safe and secure. They're sleeping there. But you know everything may collapse beneath their feet at any minute.

Devamitra: I have a sort of feeling of being on the brink in that sense. It's something which spurs me on quite a bit personally. I find it a very useful thing because I sort of feel, what happens if I don't make enough progress in this life and might not be so fortunate to have ...

S: Well, what? This life, this week!

Devamitra: Well, you know.

S: If you're really on the brink you think, well, this week, today - if I don't do it today, I may not be able to do it at all, I may not have tomorrow. I don't really ... nobody knows. You might be run over by the proverbial bus or gored by the proverbial bull.

Devamitra: When I say in this life, I mean bearing in mind that life could end tomorrow.

S: Yes, right.

Devamitra: I remember also when Maya, before Maya was ordained. He said "I really want to get ordained because I might die tomorrow."

S: Yes, right, yes.

Devamitra: (unclear)

S: Yes. I remember that when we had our first talk about that particular subject, he and I, I felt this tremendous urgency on his part. That's why I had absolutely no doubt about ordaining at all, because - you know - this is supposed to be the spirit with which one should go for refuge. As though you were a deer pursued by the hunter and you're just desperately looking around for somewhere to flee to, to be safe, to be sheltered. You should go for refuge like that. Just like that deer pursued by the hunter you're pursued by the hunters of birth, old age, disease and death. You've got to get away from them. So the deer feels on the brink. (pause)

Voice: I just get laughed at when I sound so desperate: don't be silly, it's not that (inaudible interjection).

Voice: In what circumstance? Quite often. I mean I was always saying at one time, you know it's something I really want to do, something I'm quite panic stricken about almost. But, you know, it's turned into a thing like, oh I'm being a bit extreme.

S: I feel one has to be careful to whom one speaks in this sort of way because you remember that instant which I mentioned before of the Buddha teaching, presumably in the Buddha's early days after the Enlightenment, teaching the [290] meditation on death to some of his disciples as a means of detaching them from the world, yes? And he left them practising the meditation on death, and when he came back he found they'd all become so depressed they'd committed suicide. Yes? [Vinaya vol.1 (Suttavibhanga), section 3. Also the Ananpana Samyutta (Samyutta Nikaya V.321), tr.] So, there's some sort of moral could be drawn here, I think. If one feels this oneself that's OK, but you should be very careful about bringing people to a sudden realization that they are on the brink, because they feel that there's not time to do anything, so what's the point of trying to do anything? I might die tomorrow, and I can't do anything much today. What's the point of trying?

They might feel in that sort of way, so you should be very careful in speaking in these sort of terms to some people, especially if they are rather anxious, worried people. If they are people with a lot of positivity and confidence and cheerfulness, then it's all right; they'll take it in the right spirit, will be galvanized into action. But very timid sort of fearful people, anxious and nervous people, shouldn't be spoken to in this sort of way - only the more heroic spirits; they'll find it very galvanizing, very inspiring, you know, very encouraging. If anyone does sort of genuinely feel this way himself, well obviously he shouldn't be told that it's silly. Maybe if people say that, it's because you've made them feel a bit uncomfortable. They don't want to think about being on the brink. Maybe they can't afford to do that. Perhaps you shouldn't press on them the fact that you are on the brink, or feel on the brink. It may be a bit too much for them. But certainly the occasional reflection that you are on the brink is very salutary. At least that, and there's no time to be lost. There's a lot to be done. But don't reflect that way so much that you become panic-stricken about being able to do anything.

Ratnapani: You must feel positive, basically.

S: Yes, you might think, well, I might die in half an hour's time, what's the point in doing anything positive in this next half hour; might just as well enjoy myself, there's no time to do anything worthwhile.

Ratnapani: (inaudible)

(laughter)

S: Right.

(pause)

Devamitra: I must say that in my own personal experience at that has always been a source of inspiration.

S: Well, this is probably because you are basically very healthy and positive. Simply that.

Ratnapani: I remember something of this sort on the first retreat I ever went on and it made me feel really awful, really miserable. I didn't know what to do about that one.[291]

Vimalamitra: Reading that section from the "Three Jewels" about the real nature of existence, that finally made me ask for ordination. I also felt that you were going to New Zealand at that time, I just wondered if you'd ever come back.

S: Right. I often sort of think in this way before I go off anywhere, well in case I don't come back, so and so, and so and so. When I went off to New Zealand I left a will behind, because, I don't know, I'm going by air, anything might happen. I don't want things to go wrong as far as I can help it. So I wrote out a detailed will before I left, making certain arrangements, just to make sure, as much as one can. I came back, I can write another will now, next time...
(laughter)

Voice: Buddhadasa made a point in one of the early Shabdhas about Order members making a will, but I don't know whether anyone ever took it seriously.

S: Certain Order members I know have taken it seriously and have made their wills.

Voice: It quite struck me in the new puja, "Our bodies too, like flowers..."

S: Yes, quite. (pause) There's no need to be morbidly preoccupied with death and all that kind of thing, though - you know - to be preoccupied in a positive way is very good. (pause)

Voice: (inaudible) like a dakini ...

S: Dancing in the cremation ground.

Voice: Yes, right.

Voice: Do you feel that, on the whole, within the Order, that we are sufficiently positive to think in this negative way, if you like?

S: To think in this more inspiring way, really.

Voice: Well, maybe "negative" in inverted commas.

S: I think a lot of people are, though some people are not. I don't want to name any names. I think quite a lot of people are sufficiently positive to be able to think in this sort of way, at least from time to time.

Voice: So that, in that case, will you still insist that before you do vipassana practice, but especially say something like the six element practice or the root verses practice, one should always do the metta first, or if one feels in a generally positive state of mind, is that sufficient?

S: I think if one feels generally in a positive state of mind that is sufficient, yes. (pause) But

one should be quite sure of that. I think there are not all that many people who are generally in a positive state of mind. (pause) The "guide of those on the brink. Master of birth-and-death," the word for master is kovida. It's not exactly master. I'm just going to look that up.

(long pause)

One who is in possession of right wisdom. One who is in possession of right [292] wisdom with regard to birth and death, who knows birth and death, who has mastered birth and death, who has seen through birth and death, it's more like that. (pause) "Type of the silent sage." So what is that? (pause) This is another interesting word, which is often applied to the Buddha, again from pre-Buddhist times: "muni". It means one who is silent and also one who is wise. I've gone into this before several times in lectures: the Buddha is often called maha muni, the great muni, or Sakyamuni, the sage, or silent sage or silent one of the Sakya tribe or Sakya clan. So very often the Buddha is called the muni or maha muni, or Sakyamuni. (pause)

So he is the muni, endowed with the quality of being a muni, this is what it literally means, more or less. In other words, he really is a muni, the perfect muni, or the perfect sage, as Chalmers translates, or as Hare translates, "Type of the silent sage." "Perfect in silent lore," the silent one, endowed with silentness, or the wise one endowed with wisdom. There is that double meaning. (pause) So when such a one, who cannot be provoked, whose mind is unclouded, free from all passions, void of all indolence, guide of those on the brink, master of birth and death, type of the silent sage perfect in silent lore. When such a one comes to the sacrifice, as the Buddha himself has come to Bharadvaja's sacrifice, or come near it, "him with thy brows unknit, venerate with joined hands, worship with food and drink, thus prosper with holy gifts." Why does he say "him with thy brows unknit venerate"? What does "knit brows" signify?

Devamitra: To me, submission to an authority figure, something you don't really want to do, rather than a natural sort of expression.

S: I think it's broader than that. Knit brows signify worry, yes? What does worry suggest? You're thinking about something else, yes? So when the Buddha comes into your presence, when a figure of this kind comes before you, then venerate him with brows unknit - don't worry, don't think about anything else, and especially in the case of this brahmin don't think about what to do with the remnants of your sacrifice, with your oblation; forget everything, simply venerate him. Yes? Salute, "namassatha pujetha", yes, worship, venerate, pujetha. (pause) Salute him with joined hands and worship him "with food and drink". In other words, puja and vandana, yes? Why with joined hands? This is the customary outward sign of respect, according to Indian tradition.

Devamitra: Is there any particular significance in the fact that one has joined hands when you bow to the shrine?

S: There are various traditions, for instance there is... sometimes, the Tibetans [293] touch the head, heart, and throat centres to signify the whole being - with body, speech, and mind; so that it's [demonstrates] body - speech - mind. In Theravada tradition or general Indian Buddhist tradition, you salute the gods from here [forehead, tr.] and the Three Jewels from here [crown of head, tr.], another practice, another custom.

Devamitra: That's what you actually do in the shrine room?

S: Yes.

Devamitra: You actually touch the forehead with the palm?

S: What is usually said is that the way of saluting is Brahminic or Hindu, and this is Buddhist. This forms the lotus, and this is the jewel in the lotus. So strictly, in the Buddhistic way, it's

more like this [?fingers flexed, tr.] - not like that [?fingers straight, tr.], which is said to be the Hindu way. I suppose you know when there were both Buddhists and Hindus in India in medieval times especially, when they wanted to distinguish them.

Devamitra: I was actually wondering if you do actually touch your forehead with your thumb, was there any significance in that particular gesture.

S: No - if you touch - you can't help touching with the thumbs if the thumbs are like that.

Devamitra: On the forehead.

S: Yes.

Devamitra: But there has known ...

S: Also there is this tradition of bowing the head, saluting with the head, the head being the noblest part of your body, so you salute with the noblest part of your body, suggests that you completely salute. Yes. So when you join the hands against the head you're emphasizing that you're saluting with your head. That is a Pali idiom, to say "I salute the Buddha with my head", or "I salute the Buddha's feet with my head". In other words, I completely, as it were, humble myself - the head being considered the noblest part of the body, yes?

Voice: (inaudible)

S: There's no hard and fast rule as to what one should do, so

Him with thy brows unknit
Venerate with joined hands,
Worship with food and drink,
Thus prosper with holy gifts.

So the Buddha's saying, yes, when such a person comes before you, an Enlightened person, a Tathagata, you forget everything else, don't have any worries; forget all about your sacrificial offering, just salute him, just worship him in the right sort of way, with the right sort of gifts, just be completely devoted to him. Then what does the brahmin say? He seems to be thoroughly [294] converted at last. So what does he say?

Thou art the Wake, oblation-worthy lord!
Thou art the field of merit unsurpassed!
Most meet recipient of all the world!
Great is the fruit of gifts to thee, O lord!

S: "Thou art the Wake" - you are the Buddha, you are worthy of the oblation, he still can't completely get rid of this idea of oblation. "Thou art the field for merit unsurpassed" - any offering made to you will be productive of the greatest conceivable blessings. "Most meet recipient of all the world" - not only the right recipient of my gifts of offerings, but for those of the whole world. "Great is the fruit of gifts to thee, O lord". In other words he is more or less completely converted, you may say. All right, let's go on from there, reach a conclusion.

Voice: "Then the Brahman Bharadvaja of Sundarika said thus to the Master: "'Tis amazing Master Gotama; 'tis wonderful, Master Gotama! Just as a man might set up something overturned ... even so Master Gotama has declared the Dharma in many ways. Lo, I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to Dharma and to the order of monks. I will go forth nigh to Master Gotama. I would obtain full acceptance." And Brahman Bharadvaja did so and became a man-of-worth."

S: Actually, Hare condenses, and so he misses out quite a bit. I think there's a standard passage which he's translated before. I'll just try to find that so we can read the whole thing.

(pause)

The whole thing is contained in the end of an earlier sutta in connection with another Bharadvaja Brahmin, Bharadvaja being the name of a whole gotta [i.e. lineage, tr.]. Now not long after his acceptance: "'Tis amazing Master Gotama, it's marvellous Master Gotama, just as a man might set up a thing overturned, reveal the hidden, show the way to the blind, bring a lamp into the darkness so that those with eyes could see forms, even thus Dharma has been declared in many a way by Master Gotama. Lo, I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to Dharma and to the Order of Monks. I would go forth nigh Master Gotama, I would obtain full acceptance, and Brahmin Bharadvaja went forth nigh to the Master and obtained full acceptance. Now not long after his acceptance, the Venerable Bharadvaja, dwelling alone apart, earnest, ardent, resolute, ere long entered in the abode in that supreme end of the godly life, for the goal of which clansmen's sons rightly go forth from home to homelessness, and by his own knowledge did he realize it here and now and he knew birth is destroyed, lived is the godly life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this state, then the venerable Bharadvaja became [295] a man of worth". This is a stock or standard ending to an episode when someone has been listening to the Buddha's teaching, is completely convinced by it, and goes for refuge and becomes what nowadays we unfortunately call a monk. I'll just turn back to the Pali of that earlier on.

(long pause)

So Brahmin Bharadvaja of Sundavika said this to the Master: "'Tis amazing Master Gotama. 'Tis wonderful Master Gotama! Just as a man might set up something overturned or reveal what has been hidden away or tell a man who'd gone astray which was his way or bring a lamp into darkness, so that those with eyes might see the things about them, even so in many ways has Gotama made his doctrine (or Dharma) clear." This is the Brahmin's immediate reaction. I think it's quite important to go into this and try to as it were understand it. What does the Brahmin feel, or what does he experience?

Vimalamitra: He started seeing.

S: Yes, there's been a complete change. That is illustrated, and again that is a standard or stock passage with four comparisons. He feels, he says, it's just as though someone had set upright something that had been knocked over or knocked down or turned over. Yes, it's just like revealing something that had been hidden or telling someone his way when he'd lost his way or bringing a lamp into the darkness. Let's look at each of those in turn: "It's as though a man might set up again what had fallen down." What does this suggest?

Voice: It suggests a previous fall from grace.

S: As it were, yes. "Just as a man might set up a thing overturned." Hare says "reveal the hidden, show the way to the blind, bring a lamp into the darkness". It suggests that our ordinary state is a state of being upside down, turned over, knocked over, knocked down, but we don't see that. It's only when the Buddha expounds the Dharma, or the Enlightened person, you know, enables us to see things in a completely new perspective, that we realize that we are in a sort of topsy-turvy state. There is a Pali word and a Sanskrit word that expresses this. There's the term called vipariyasa. Have you come across this term? There are four vipariyasas. Vipariyasa mean a sort of topsy-turviness. So it means seeing what is painful as pleasant, seeing what is impermanent as permanent, seeing what is insubstantial as substantial, and seeing what is repulsive as attractive. These are the four vipariyasas, the four topsy-turvy ways of seeing things, seeing things the wrong way round, seeing things all upside down. So usually we live in this topsy-turvy, upside down state. But when the Buddha appears, [296] when the Dharma is made clear, everything is set upright. Everything is turned the right way round.

Voice: Can you say these four again?

S: Seeing that which is painful as pleasant, seeing the impermanent as permanent, seeing the insubstantial as substantial, and seeing the repulsive as attractive. These are all dealt with in some detail in "The Three Jewels" by the way, yes? The four vipariyasas. They're quite important. The first three correspond to the three laksanas, the three characteristics of all conditioned existence. Yes? As usually given. But, you know, one of the things that happens is that when you start straightening yourself out everybody else thinks you're crooked. If you start standing upright everybody else thinks you're upside down, because they're still upside down. If you start going in the right direction everybody else, all your friends and relations, think you're going in the wrong direction. This is why he says the spiritual life is going against the stream, going against the current, i.e. the stream or current of worldly life. So this is why you cannot in a sense expect to justify yourself to people who do not share your ideals. They cannot but regard you as misguided and foolish, this is inevitable, you have to accept this. (pause) If they think you're doing the right thing you're probably compromising. (pause) (laughter) Be very suspicious of yourself when worldly people approve of what you are doing. (laughter)

Ratnapani: I think there are exceptions.

S: There are always exceptions.

Ratnapani: ...sort of person like my father, for instance. He said "I haven't got a clue what you're up to but you look healthy on it. You look like you're happy, so I guess it's all right."

S: Well, happiness is the criterion.

Ratnapani: Yes.

S: Suppose you looked miserable.

Ratnapani: Then he'd think it's all wrong. Yes.

S: Yes. (pause) But fair enough, you know, you don't want to antagonize people unnecessarily. If they feel that they can sympathize with you and can even up to a point, fair enough. (pause)

Vimalamitra: It's very difficult for materialistic people to see why you want to give up opportunities.

S: Yes.

Various voices: Nobody works for nothing ...[297] Why don't you get married, settle down ... You're not really happy, you think you're happy (laughter) but how can you be happy like that?

S: Again to go a little forward in Buddhist history. In the Yogacara school there is this talk of the turning about, the paravritti, the turning round, or, as Suzuki translates it, the revolution in the deepest seat of consciousness, the turning right the way round, seeing things in a completely different perspective: paravritti, turned about. So if you're turned about, obviously everybody else is turned the other way round, you know, in as much as the minority is always wrong, they'll think you're turning the wrong way and they're all turning the right way, you will think otherwise and sometimes you'll have to keep that thought to yourself.

Voice: Gnostics and mystics tend to go into this quite deeply.

S: Yes, true.

Ratnapani: More bizarre, that someone who really is turned around in the deepest sense, taking that none of us are really, we're almost half and half as it were: going in a particular

direction but still very much with the other direction.

S: Well, this is most people's state for quite a long time, obviously.

Devamitra: I suppose it's a question of the intention and the actuality.

S: Yes. (pause) All right, "setting up what you overturned", "Reveal the hidden". The Brahmin feels as though something that was hidden has been revealed. What do you think that means?

Vimalamitra: There always seems to be something that sometimes you know you are on the track of something, you're getting near somewhere, but you never actually see it.

S: And suddenly you sort of see the light as it were, somebody says something or you read something or you think something or you have a sudden flash of vision, flash of inspiration: everything becomes clear.

Voice: As if you knew it all along.

S: As if you knew it all along. Yes. (pause) "Show the way to the blind," "Show the way to the blind," or as Chalmers has translated it, "tell a man who had gone astray which was his way." Give him a sense of direction. The Brahmin's got a sense of direction now. He sees his way. The way has been shown to him. So what exactly do you think that means, or how important is [298] that?

Voice: He knows what to do.

S: He knows what to do. He's not floundering any more, not on the wrong track. Before he was on the wrong track, though he didn't know it. Now the true way, the real way, has been shown. He realizes that he's gone astray. So have people ever had that sort of experience? Suddenly realizing you'd been on the wrong track, but now you see the real way that you've got to go? You see what you've got to do next? (agreement and laughter) I don't mean just with regard to little everyday matters but - you know - quite basic fundamental matters. You see that you've really gone astray, you've got off the track or maybe never got onto it - that you were on the wrong road. But now you see the right road, the main road, and you know where it's heading and you know that you've got to tread it.

That fourth simile: "bring a lamp into darkness so that those with eyes can see forms." Not very much unlike revealing the hidden, maybe a bit more explicit, a bit more detailed. (pause) So what do you think the Brahmin is trying to convey by the simile?

Voice: He can see.

S: He sees, he sees more clearly, he sees in a more detailed manner. So as I said, this whole passage is a stock passage or standard passage. So one could say that one isn't concerned here simply with the response to the Buddha's words of this particular Brahmin. It's a sort of almost archetypal situation, almost archetypal response of the worldly person, especially the person immersed in ethnic values whose eyes are suddenly opened to the truth and who does respond to it. This is his experience. He feels as though something that has been overturned has been set up; something that was hidden has been revealed, that the way has been shown to the blind, a lamp brought into the darkness. He experiences all this in a very sort of overwhelming manner. When he says "'Tis amazing Master Gotama, 'tis marvellous Master Gotama", what are those words? Let's just see (pause) "abhikkantam bho Gotama, abhikkantam bho Gotama": wonderful, marvellous, it's the same word, amazing, so what do you think this sort of signifies?

Vimalamitra: He's blasted out. (laughter)

S: Plato says all philosophy begins with a sense of wonder, that may be putting it rather mildly, the Brahmin has experienced it in a much more dramatic fashion, a much more cataclysmic fashion.[299]

Chintamani: What about that Caravaggio painting of the conversion of St Paul, where he's lying on his back on the ground.

S: So what is the result of all this? He says "Lo, I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to Dharma and to the order of monks. I would go forth nigh Master Gotama, I would obtain full acceptance." So he goes for refuge. This is his response to what he has seen, to what he has realized. This is his response to the impact of the Dharma on him. He goes for refuge, to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. You notice he goes for refuge to the sangha of bhikkhus, there was a little note about this sort of thing in Shabda not so long ago: that the object of refuge was always the Arya Sangha, not bhikkhu sangha, that is not strictly speaking correct, though probably at that stage there was no real distinction between Arya Sangha and bhikkhu sangha. The two maybe were the same or virtually the same. But why do you think he says he goes for refuge to the bhikkhu sangha, the community of almsmen let's say, to avoid the term monk, the community of full-timers. He goes for refuge to the community of the fully committed, this is what it really means, you know, degree of realization apart, they are the fully committed. Those who are trying their utmost, who are not compromising, because only by going for refuge to them can he get any real help for himself, not by going for refuge to the semi-committed, that won't help him. So he goes for refuge and he goes forth. "I would go forth nigh Master Gotama", so here is this going forth.

He intends to leave behind home, family, the whole household situation, all the sacrificial paraphernalia, the Vedas, the Vedic rites, the Vedic traditions, all his Brahmin friends and acquaintances, pupils. He's going to leave, he's going to "go forth nigh, Master Gotama," that is, as it were, under the auspices of the Buddha, and he wishes to obtain full acceptance into the community. This is what afterwards became becoming a bhikkhu, becoming a monk, but really there is this twofold procedure: you go forth from your home, from your clan or whatever, from conditioned existence, from worldly life, and then you are accepted into the community of the committed. This is what he wants to do. He wants to leave everything behind and be accepted by the Buddha's disciples as one of themselves, a full-time disciple that is. The bhikkhus and Brahmin Bharadvaja "went forth nigh to the Master and obtained full acceptance". In later terminology he received the lower and higher ordination, which gives quite a different flavour to the whole thing. "Now not long after his acceptance the venerable Bharadvaja (he'd become "Venerable" Bharadvaja, you notice) dwelling alone, [300] apart, earnest, ardent, resolute, ere long entered in the abode, in that supreme end of godly life." We don't like "godly life" very much, do we? It's the brahmacariya, the noble life, the sublime life, the spiritual life. It's no long time afterwards.

Vimalamitra: Is this the bit missing in this last sentence?

S: Yes, that's right. I'm restoring it from earlier on in the Sutta Nipata where it's given in full: "Now not long time after his acceptance the Venerable Bharadvaja, - eko vupakattho - living solitary," which doesn't necessarily mean out of contact with other members of the Sangha: "eko" doesn't mean by himself in the literal sense, but as an individual; it's more like that. Otherwise what would be the point in going for refuge to the bhikkhu sangha if you are going to go away and live on your own afterwards all the time? (pause) So, alone, solitary; appamato: mindful; atapi - that's a very good word translated as ardent, which isn't bad, it's more like blazing, with his energy all on fire, it's connected of course with this tapati, heat, with his energy all ablaze, resolute, with aroused self, determined self. "Ere long entered and abode in that supreme end of the godly life" the goal of the whole brahmacariya, the goal of the whole spiritual life, that is to say Enlightenment or nirvana itself. "That goal for the sake of which the sons of clans rightly go forth from home to homelessness, and he knew "birth is destroyed", (there's no more birth for me) "lived is the godly life" (I've accomplished the spiritual life) "done is what had to be done;" I've done my duty, as it were, "there is no more of this state", there's no more conditioned existence for me. Again, this is the standard or

stock conclusion, "and the Venerable Bharadvaja became a man-of-worth", he became an arahant, in later technical terminology, yes? He became worthy of offerings.

So you see the sort of pattern, you see the sort of sequence. First of all the Brahmin is immersed in his sacrificial duties, immersed in the Vedic tradition with his limited ethnic outlook, suddenly coming into contact with the Buddha, in fact through that ethnic preoccupation because he was looking for someone to whom he could offer his oblation, but the Buddha very quickly leads him beyond all that, and presents him with the ideal of Enlightenment itself, which clearly makes a tremendous impact on him even though he initially resists it quite strongly, and tries to cling onto his, you know, his ethnic past, though eventually he is completely overwhelmed and accepts it, accepts the ideal. [301] And he feels as though he's been sort of spiritually reborn, as though there's a new life for him, he's been completely turned around, he's seen what he didn't see before. Everything has become changed. He himself feels new, feels changed. So the result of this is he goes for refuge. He commits himself to the realization of that ideal, commits himself to the Three Jewels, and goes forth, leaves behind the past, leaves behind the old, leaves home, is accepted by the community of the Buddha's disciples, practises himself, and realizes, reaches the Goal. That is the pattern. That is the sequence. It's in a way quite a familiar one in the Pali scriptures. It happens in all sorts of ways many, many times.

Ratnapani: Then you say he "eventually" was converted. It must have taken ten minutes. It is pretty fantastic.

S: Yes. Though of course towards the end he says "after no long time..." that is, no long time after his acceptance into the spiritual community. It could have been months, could have been years, could have been twenty, thirty, forty years. But it's no long time, you know, not in view of what it is one's seeking to attain. It might have taken, or probably did take, several decades, but "in no long time". It's not too long, because you get there in the end.

All right. What sort of general impression do we get from this sutta as a whole - apart from what I've said?

Dave: Packed with information.

S: Packed with information, yes. What sort of information are you thinking of?

Dave: Well, what it's like to be a Tathagata. What you've got to get through.

(pause)[302]

Ratnapani: It leaves me extremely stimulated by the thought of being a healthy human being and meeting a Buddha.

S: Yes, right.

Ratnapani: ... and it's incredible the difference between them and what we have to go through (being what we are).

S: Because even that Brahmin, immersed as he was in his ethnic beliefs and practices, must have been a relatively healthy person.

David: A spiritual leader of some kind.

S: Yes, very likely. (pause) Ah, this is interesting. I've just noticed something. (quotes Pali) Not just going forth from home into homelessness, but taking up the "anagariya" or "anagarika" life. I mean this term is used sometimes synonymously with the term "bhikkhu".

Phil: What exactly is the anagarika?

S: Well in modern Buddhism it means one who has left home, but who hasn't become ordained as a bhikkhu, but who is more or less living like one - like Anagarika Dharmapala, you know, the founder of the Maha Bodhi Society. But in the Pali texts we sometimes find the term "anagarika" used very much like "bhikkhu".

Voice: What about as in Lama Anagarika Govinda?

S: Well he started off as being an anagarika in the real sense, but many Buddhists were not at all happy when he continued using the term even after getting married. I mean probably that was quite improper.[303]

Dick: He's also called lama: Lama Anagarika Govinda.

S: Yes. Again some people aren't quite happy about that, because lama is not a title one gives oneself. It's just what people call you, or, the way people regard you. Originally he was Anagarika Brahmachari Govinda. But after being married obviously one can't call oneself brahmachari - which means celibate, bachelor, but I suppose he didn't want to make his name sound too different from before, so he kept on the anagarika. But strictly speaking, that isn't correct.

Chintamani: Has he received no ordination before?

S: Not as far as I know. Not as far as I know...

Devamitra: Is it just sort of style, the title?

S: Well, lama, yes. He might have had a ceremony for anagarika originally. I just don't know that. It's possible. But that would have been in Ceylon, quite a long time ago.

Dick: Presumably he received some formal ordination from Tomo Geshe Rimpoche.

S: Oh yes, he received initiation, but to be a lama is again something quite different. I mean Tibetans use the word lama rather differently from what we've come to use it. They don't say Lama So-and-so, they just never use the word in this way. They would say, "he is my lama." They use it like that, or "the lama from whom I received the initiation." It's not used as a title: Lama So-and-so, Lama Such-and-such. No, they never use it in this way. They don't for instance even say "the Dalai Lama". They don't use this expression. This is an expression used by Westerners. They usually refer to the Dalai Lama as Yeshe Norbu, which means the chintamani: Yeshe Norbu or gyama-cinta, gyama-ratna. Yeshe Norbu: the jewel of knowledge.

Vimalamitra: How in that case has he... Has Lama Govinda actually taken refuge in Buddhism?[304]

S: Yes. This thing he has done, he must have done, yes. Maybe, though, not in quite the way we regard this. Because this tradition was practically lost in the East, of taking the Going for Refuge as seriously as it was taken in the old days and as we now take it. But on the whole the Tibetans take it very, very much more seriously than most other Buddhists do.

Vimalamitra: How important is it to formally take Refuge? Presumably you may...

S: Well, I think "formally" itself is the wrong word. I know what you mean but, you know, for us in the West "formal" has come to mean something quite bad, sort of merely external, in a sense a bit artificial and unnecessary, you "merely do it formally", "it's a mere formality", yes? You're told, "Just sign on the dotted line. It's a mere formality". It doesn't really mean anything. But that is not the Buddhist view. You do everything with body, speech, and mind. So if you go for Refuge you as it were do it properly, you do it fully and completely; which means in front of an actual spiritual community, not just in your head. You actually go

through the motions, because you want to do it completely with every particle of yourself. But still, in any long-standing tradition, there's always the danger of something becoming actually formal in the negative sense, and that one has to safeguard against. I was thinking the other day it might be a good idea if we really emphasized the going forth and make it much more difficult that it's been so far.

Devamitra: In what sense?

S: Well, there's a sort of literal going forth of someone just literally leaving home, of giving up everything, before they are allowed to go for Refuge and to be accepted.

Prakasha: Perhaps a long period of solitary retreat.

S: A long period of solitary retreat or something of that sort. In fact several people who are going to be ordained, or who know that they're going to be ordained, do make a point [305] of this - of having a solitary retreat beforehand. This is very much in that sort of spirit.

Dave: What about sort of chucking someone out of Sukhavati, or not allowing them to go to any of the centres and they haven't got any money or anything?

S: But that's quite good for the really committed - but, (laughter) you know, we have friends. If they're out of contact they might not be able to carry on at all. I mean, one must really be careful about that.

Devamitra: Sorry, I'm not quite sure about what you're actually suggesting.

Dave: Well like somebody wants to be ordained to not allow them to sleep, or live off...

S: You mean the centre has become like a home for them, you mean?

Dave: Yes.

S: Yes, so they've got to go forth from the centre, as much as they would have gone forth from home.

Dave: Or the Friends as a whole.

S: But you don't really go forth FROM the spiritual community.

Dave: No.

S: You can only go forth from the spiritual community to the extent that you've misunderstood it as just a group.

Chintamani: Though it could be quite good to spend some time living... (three or four words unclear)...

Dave: Maybe just for a month.

S: Well, that's the solitary retreat.[306]

Dave: Yes.

S: I mean, maybe before people sort of go for Refuge, there should be a much sharper and clearer and more open break with the world, as it were.

Ratnapani: You've mentioned a few things like being clear of debt, and so on.

S: Yes, right.

Ratnapani: But often people do just seem to, it just appears to be a mark on the calendar and their life goes on.

S: I mean this is - I mean I think you all know - a sort of rigorous application of the path of regular steps; because you can sort of go for Refuge quite sincerely and work on leaving home afterwards. In fact Going for Refuge may give you strength to break off and leave home. So, one mustn't be sort of too rigid about it. But it would be very good if at least some people made a complete clean break with their past and then just went for Refuge. You know, some do, some have done that: they give up their jobs, leave home, yes, they're there, you know, completely at the disposal of whatever needs to be done.

Dave: My parents seem to be going round the bend. They sent me this letter which just repeats, which requires information which I've sent before, about the shrine room.

S: Well this is what people do in ordinary conversation don't they. They just go on telling you things which they've told you several times or more, or they've been telling you all your life.

Dave: I've just got the feeling that me cutting myself off from them is affecting them in some way, maybe not that well.

S: Well that may be. It depends - the extent to which you're cutting yourself off - whether you're the only son, et cetera.

Dave: Yes, I'm the only one.[307]

S: Maybe it's likely then. (pause) But generally, for not only parents but for friends and people you've known before, it must be a quite baffling sort of situation. They can't really understand what you are doing and why. And this is not very pleasant for anybody. They just can't understand. They try to explain it in a way which is satisfactory to themselves, or in terms that they can comprehend - even if it (?) concluding that you've gone a bit crazy, gone a bit off your rocker.

Devamitra: I suppose in fact that this kind of situation could have been quite dangerous a few years ago when I believe it was still possible for one, say for one's immediate family, to have you certified.

S: Oh yes, indeed.

Devamitra: I don't think that's possible any more, is it?

S: I wouldn't... I don't think it is. I think there are more safeguards now. Apparently a wife can have a husband certified. She just has to get I think two doctors, or even one doctor, sympathetic and sign the certificate, and he'll be bundled away.

Devamitra: But I just mention this because in fact my own parents actually mentioned this to me: that they were thinking of calling in the psychiatrist...

S: Gosh.

Devamitra: ... and it sort of... I sort of, I became quite worried about that, because I know there was a sort of legal situation; and, one wonders, if such a situation did arise what on earth could one do about that?

S: I think this is just an indication of the very dangerous position occupied by the psychiatrist to some extent in society today. I think I've referred to Soviet Russia, where the psychiatrist is in the pay of the State, and where you can be [308] certified in sort of subtler ways in other

countries for, in a way, leading your own life. You're regarded as requiring treatment. Of course, this is one of the advantages of being a religious order you see, and having that sort of label, because that is as it were socially acceptable. It's intelligible.

Chintamani: How long ago was that?

Devamitra: Last time I was home.

Voice: (inaudible) how many ...?

Devamitra: (inaudible)

S: But when people feel threatened, I mean however near and dear they may be, they may go to all lengths. I mean in the old days fathers used to have their sons arrested and dragged off to prison until they came to their senses, just fed them on bread and water until they came round and did what their parents wanted them to do; which was usually get married and settle down. "Forget all about this spiritual nonsense. Think of that when you're old, think about that when you're my age - let's say about seventy - that'll be high time for that!" That's very often the attitude, or used to be the attitude. It's a very heavy sort of thing that... there has started going around as it were that there's something wrong with you, or you need... as I mentioned at breakfast time about Guru Maharaji's men. Were you there when I was talking about that?

Devamitra: I was here. I was listening in actually.

S: Well they used this sort of technique it seems.

Vimalamitra: Bit more subtle.

S: But ... Kevin told me that when he went to the Alexandra Palace just to see what the Guru Maharaji people, the Divine Light people, were doing, for the big successful meeting, that there were several Christian protesters who were trying to stand up and say that "only Jesus is the Saviour". So the strong-arm [309] men moved in and marched them outside, and Kevin followed to see what would happen to them. And the Divine Light people had their own psychiatrist; and these people were taken to see the psychiatrist. (pause) We'll just have to get our own psychiatrist! (laughter) But you see the danger of a situation when these sorts of people are invested with authority and power? They are in a position to certify you.

Chintamani: That's horrific.

Voice: Really frightening.

Ratnapani: It's quite likely... a quite unhealthy human being in fact.

S: Oh yes, indeed, indeed. I mean this is the worst aspect of it.

Ratnapani: I mean, a friend of mine ended up at a psychiatrist's, I think via the courts. It was a way of getting out of home trouble. He said he felt really sorry for this bloke. He really wanted to help him because he was such a mess - the psychiatrist who was supposed to be sorting him out - he was really a terrible mess.

S: Why do you become a psychiatrist? I mean that wants looking into. I mean, you've heard the old joke, the Jewish joke. I don't know whether you've heard it? But someone once said, "A man who goes to see a psychiatrist needs his head looking into". (laughter) It's more like the man who becomes a psychiatrist needs HIS head looking at.

Dave: Can't you get... if you know some psychiatrists can't you get them to certify you as sane? To combat any other psychiatrist...

S: I suppose you could. It's very interesting to see, or to hear about, the different opinions given by psychiatrists on the Patty Hearst case. Some of them seem to consider [310] her a model of sanity who acted in a perfectly reasonable manner. Others considered her a thoroughly sick, neurotic young woman seriously in need of help. It depends who's paying you.

Vimalamitra: What's the Patty Hearst case?

S: Well she was kidnapped, and then she joined her kidnappers and robbed banks, to tell the story briefly. (laughter) But among the experts there can be this difference of opinion on this very vital matter of mental health; and it's these who are in a position, apparently, to say who is mentally healthy and who is not. A certain legal force attaches to their opinion.

Phil: I think "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest" showed them all up.

S: Yes, right, indeed, it did. So what has happened, or what is happening? I'm told that that film is a bit out of date and that even in the States now things aren't as bad as that. I just wonder.

Vimalamitra: It's very... I think it's very kind of, a bit mechanical there. I remember going into a psychiatric hospital, for a short time, (laughter) and they had all these... You had to go through certain little processes, circles of patients, and talk over your problems, and why you were there, and what you were doing.

S: It seems to be almost as dangerous to have sort of experts in mental health, as to have experts in religion. People have got to know all about the thing factually - but you know they're quite out of touch with it in terms of life.

Chintamani: I remember going to see some free shrink in my adolescent years... tormented me. I had amongst other things, passion for a young lady - so this psychiatrist in all good faith just brightly says, "Ring her up and try to get [311] involved with her."

Vimalamitra: (laughs)

Ratnapani: Didn't he assure you that probably, since your passion was so strong, you'd end up marrying her and all would be all right in the end?

Chintamani: No, it didn't go that far, but he said that I ought to try and sort of summon up courage to get in there.

Vimalamitra: A bit of fatherly advice.

S: Anyway, any final comment on anything in this particular sutta? Any final thought suggest itself? (pause)

Devamitra: I just really found the whole background to the thing so appealing - that it was so uncomplicated then; and sort of in a way I sort of wish that it was equally uncomplicated here.

S: Well, for some people it is. I mean I've met a few people within the Friends, you know, who are just leading their worldly lives more or less happily. And they happen to come along to a centre, start meditating, hear some taped lectures, and really felt quite suddenly that they saw everything differently and wanted just to get involved. This does sometimes happen, and I think probably it's going to happen more and more.

Devamitra: That's on a very much lower level. I mean it in terms of gaining full Enlightenment, which means a vaster step. And it was so much easier in those days, it seems.

S: Yes, I think actually it was, you know, without idealizing the past. I think the whole situation, the whole social and cultural situation, was so much more helpful, or at least it didn't get in the way to nearly the same extent.

Ratnapani: Not to mention that one had a Buddha walking around and talking to you.[312]

S: You could of course disentangle yourself from it much more easily.

Vimalamitra: Well you could just walk out into the forest. There was (one word) there (three or four words unclear). I mean you could be fed quite easily with no...

S: People were happy to feed you. It was as though they made merit by feeding you. They were happy to have the opportunity of feeding you, they were grateful to you for giving them that opportunity. And they had quite different attitudes.

Devamitra: I think it's that sort of thing that I find really appealing actually: that it's practically so much easier. You don't have to worry about the dole or anything like that. You just get on with it.

S: Right, yes.

Vimalamitra: I think if you've got... if you kind of realize the world is pretty mad, and then you don't quite so put down by other people's reactions.

Devamitra: That's true, but you are still, to some extent, dependent on it.

Vimalamitra: Well yes.

S: You have to have dealings with these crazy people.

Devamitra: You can't give up the going into Sainsbury's and all that sort of ...

Vimalamitra: Maybe you can think of yourself as Alice in Wonderland. (laughter)

S: All right. Let's leave it there.[313]

Chintamani: Before we go on could I ask a question about something that... (seven or eight words unclear)... meditation practice?

S: Yes?

Chintamani: You said how vipassana-type practices are usually preceded by a period of metta or ...

S: Well yes, vipassana is usually preceded with samatha. I mean, metta being one type of samatha practice.

Chintamani: Something like, say, well, a visualization. I know you've said it's good to precede it by... to do it on a firm foundation of positivity. Well if one was going through a phase of general negativity - is it best to drop visualizations all together and just do ...

S: Yes, probably it is, probably it is. In any case all the visualizations are as it were Vajrayana practices, so one normally recapitulates the Hinayana and Mahayana first. The Hinayana is recapitulated by the Going for Refuge, the Mahayana by the development of the bodhicitta, and the practice of the twelve brahma viharas, especially the metta bhavana. So these form, in a sense, an integral part of the whole visualization practice, sort of naturally leading up to it. So if one can't do those, in a sense one can't do the visualization. So in any case, you have to sort of go back to the Going for Refuge; and, if not the development of the bodhicitta, well at

least the metta bhavana.

Chintamani: And presumably also balance that with the Mindfulness of Breathing.

S: Yes. Right, whose turn is it to read?

Dick: (5) Magha Sutta

"Thus have I heard: Once, while the Master dwelt near Rajagaha on Mount Vulture Peak, the young brahman Magha came and visited him; and after [314] greeting him and exchanging the usual compliments, he sat down at one side. So seated, the young brahman spake thus to the Master:

"Master Gotama, I am a liberal giver, bountiful, genial, easy to beg of. I seek wealth rightly, and then I give from wealth rightly gotten, rightly acquired, to one, to two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten; I give even to twenty, to thirty, forty, fifty; I give to a hundred even; ay! and to more. Prithee, Master Gotama, in so giving, so bestowing, do I beget much merit?"

S: Right. Give the... read the Buddha's reply.

Dick: "Certainly, young man, in so giving, so bestowing, from wealth rightly gotten, rightly acquired ... a man begets much merit."

S: All right. What sort of impression do you get about Magha from this little exchange?

Devamitra: He is very confident.

S: Confident.

Devamitra: Generous.

S: Generous. (pause)

Vimalamitra: He's open.

S: Open.

Chintamani: It seems a bit funny that he's sort of... he's almost saying, "I'm doing all these things. Am I going to get a lot back for it?" It seems a bit weird.

S: I don't know that it's weird. In a way it seems, in a way it's natural.[315]

Devamitra: He seems a bit naive actually.

S: Naive, yes... naive. And what else do you think?

Devamitra: There's a certain eagerness as well.

S: Eagerness?

Devamitra: Yes.

S: I don't personally get that impression, maybe because I've met such Brahmins, and they haven't changed all that much over the centuries. I get the impression of complacency, yes?

Ratnapani: Are you thinking of the Christian giver in the temple?

S: Yes. I get an impression of complacency. He knows quite well that it is generally accepted, generally understood, that if you give generously, certainly that is a meritorious action, and you reap your due reward. But he wants to be able to hear this. He wants as it were to hear the Buddha say, "Yes, you are a very generous man, Magha. Yes, there will be a very great reward of all your generosity." It's as though he's asking the Buddha this with the intention of getting from the Buddha the reply that he wants, that he likes to hear. I get this sort of impression. So therefore I feel that, yes, he is generous, there is a certain measure of sincerity, he does give, he is open; but at the same time he is rather conscious of what he's doing, he's conscious that he's generous, in a rather naive, complacent sort of way. He thinks he's a rather good sort of person, a rather generous man. He thinks he's really as it were pious, that he thinks he's religious, he's doing his duty, he's doing the right thing. And he likes to hear the Buddha say so, and tell him that, yes, you're doing the right thing. Not that he has any real doubt about it, but because of his sort of almost egoistic complacency; and he likes as it were to be congratulated on the good thing he is doing.

Vimalamitra: Is he asking if it's right, if he's going about things in the right way?[316]

S: Well he seems already to believe that anyway. Yes? But he just wants to be as it were congratulated by the Buddha. I mean as I say I've met many people like this in India. They come to you and they say, "I do this and I do that. Do you think there's any benefit from this?" They know quite well you're going to say yes. That's what they want to hear. But there's not anything negative in it really. It's just a rather naive sort of self-satisfaction and complacency. So the Buddha, quite straightforwardly, gives Magha the answer that he wants. And he says, "Certainly, young man, in so giving, so bestowing, from wealth rightly gotten, rightly acquired ... a man begets much merit."

Magha has got the reply that he expected and that he wanted. Then you get as it were the same thing in verse, but going further.

And Magha spoke to the Master in this verse:

(487) "I ask sooth-speaking Gotama,
Who homeless fares in yellow robe:
Goodman who merit needs and seeks,
The ready almoner who here
Gives unto others food and drink,
Wherein lies fair prosperity
For that oblation-offerer?"

(488) "Goodman who merit needs and seeks,
Magha," the Master made reply...
"He should make offerings prosperous
By giving to gift-worthy ones."

(489) "Sir, tell me of gift-worthy ones,"
Said the young brahman Magha then.

S: So he, in a way, has got the same preoccupation as the Bharadvaja, the previous Brahmin. Incidentally it's interesting that the Buddha is coming into contact with all these Brahmins. So Magha says "I ask sooth-speaking..." that is, truth-speaking "...Gotama who homeless fares in yellow robe: Goodman ..." that is, householder, "...who merit needs and seeks the ready almoner who here gives unto others [317] food and drink, wherein lies fair prosperity for that oblation-offerer?" In other words, "Who is the proper person to give to?" He's still asking that. And then the Buddha says, "Goodman who merit needs and seeks Magha" the Master made reply "he should make offerings prosperous by giving to gift-worthy ones."

So there is this same sort of shift of emphasis in this sutta as there is - or as there was - in the previous one. From "the person who is worthy of oblation" to the person "who is worthy of gifts in general". In other words from the brahmanic ideal, the ethnic ideal, to the spiritual

ideal of the Enlightened person or the Tathagata. So this leads straight into an exposition of who is the Tathagata, or what the Enlightened man is like, which is pretty much the same as what the Buddha has said in the other sutta to Bharadvaja. But maybe someone would like to read straight through what the Buddha says next: that whole description, and then we'll just deal with any points in which it's different from the previous one.

The Master: (490) "Who fare not clinging in the world,
Whole, men-of-naught, and curbed-of-self:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(491) Who with all ties and fetters cut
Are tamed, released, gone stir and hope:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(492) Who from all bonds emancipate
Are tamed, released, gone stir and hope
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(493) Who, quit of passion, error, hate,
With cankers quenched, have godly lived:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(494) In whom dwells neither guile nor pride,
Greedless and 'mine'-less, done with hope:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(495) Who never unto cravings fall,
Flood-crossers, faring free of 'mine':
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(496) Who crave for nowhere in the world,
Here, hence, becoming(1) this or that:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(497) Who pleasures quit and homeless fare,
Restrained-of-self, as shuttle straight:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(498) Who, passionless and sense-composed,
Are freed as moon from Rahu's grasp:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(499) Men calmed, wrath gone and passion-free,
Without a future(2) here to quit
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

[notes: (1) Bhayabbavaya, to become this and not that. (2) Gati.][317A]

(500) Men wholly loosed from birth-and-death,
O'ercomers of all "how?" and "why?"
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(501) Who wayfare in the world, all-freed,
With self as island,(1) men-of-naught:
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

(502) Who here know this as so: "This is
The end: there is no more to come":
To them meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make,

(503) Ay, to the lore-adept, alert.
Rapt muser fain, awakening won,
(The haven here for many men):
To him meed-eager brahman should
In season due oblation make.

[Notes: (1) Attadipa]

S: So what is the Buddha in effect saying? He's giving a description of the same ideal as before, though he's not going quite so far, or even nearly so far. He sort of stops short in the case of this young brahmin. He doesn't give quite such a full or quite such a profound exposition as he did previously. But he goes quite far, all the same. So he is saying, in effect, that it is to the Enlightened One, to the Buddha, to the Tathagata, that the brahmin, the religious-minded person who wants to acquire merit, should make his offering, because the Buddha is the supreme field of merit for such offerings. This is, in effect, what he is saying. Within that sort of framework he's introducing and quite powerfully presenting the spiritual ideal, i.e. the ideal of the Enlightened man. So it's practically the same, so [318] far as it goes, as the ideal as previously presented. You notice he mentions that there's the same expressions: "men-of-naught", "not clinging to the world", "curbed of self", "ties and fetters cut", "emancipate", "quit of passion", "in whom dwells neither guile nor pride". It's more or less the same. But do you notice any points or any epithets which have not been mentioned before? There are a few.

Voice: "Flood-crossers".

S: We have had that: ogham samahito has been mentioned here. Those who cross the flood of birth-and-death (or the samsara) of conditioned existence.

Phil: There's one of them "with self as island".

S: "With self as island." Yes, we've not had that before. "Attadipa." This comes, in fact, very significantly, in the last words that the Buddha addressed to Ananda: "Attadipa, attasarana; dhammadipa, dhammasarana": abide as one who has the self as island, the self as refuge; the Dharma as island, the Dharma as Refuge. Perhaps we can go into that a bit. What is meant by having the self as one's island? It can also be translated as "light" or "lamp": the self as one's lamp, or the self as one's light. But the general meaning remains the same as "dipa" can either mean "island" or "lamp". So what does it mean to have the self as one's island? Let's take it in that sense.

Dick: Being sufficient unto one's self.

S: Being sufficient unto oneself. But then it says, "having the Dhamma as one's island"; or at least the Buddha says in that other context "having the Dharma as one's island". So what does

that mean? Or, are not the two contradictory - though the Buddha juxtaposes them?

Chintamani: If you become Enlightened, your self is the Dharma.

S: Yes, but does the Buddha mean that in this case quite?[319]

Dave: It's that the Dharma that's sufficiency... (pause)

Devamitra: One becomes self-sufficient through the practice of the Dharma.

S: Through the practice of the Dharma, yes. The two aren't really exclusive: depending on self and depending on the Dharma. It's like swimming in the sea: when you swim in the sea you depend on your own efforts, on the movements of your own arms and legs, to swim. But if the water wasn't there you wouldn't be able to swim at all. The presence of the element water is the necessary condition of your swimming. So you're dependent on the water, you're dependent on yourself, but at the same time, you're dependent on the water - or else you couldn't swim. So in the same way, in your spiritual life, you're dependent on yourself - in the sense that you have to make the effort - but you're dependent on the Dharma in the sense of the Dharma being the sustaining spiritual principle on the basis of which, or with the support of which, we make the effort. So both are your island, both are your refuge. So the two are really interconnected. You can't fly in a vacuum, you can't swim in a vacuum, you can't walk in a vacuum. So the Dharma is like the ground beneath your feet when you walk, or the water in which you swim when you swim, or the air in which you fly when you fly. Without the resistance offered by the air you couldn't fly.

Chintamani: Is this what you meant in the Survey when you said that the self-help approach of Zen does not contradict the other-regarding? [p.239 in the 2001 edition, tr.]

S: Yes, one could very much say that, yes. But I mean it's all right to talk in terms of being self-sufficient - one should talk and think in these terms - but are you ever absolutely self-sufficient?

Chintamani: No.[320]

S: No. But on the other hand is it enough to depend absolutely on something or someone else? I mean that isn't sufficient either, is it? So you've got to have both as it were interlocking. The two are not mutually exclusive. They may look exclusive perhaps, but they aren't really. So depending on yourself and making yourself an island, or being an island unto yourself, does not exclude depending upon the Dharma and making the Dharma your island or refuge. In fact you cannot depend upon yourself unless you depend upon the Dharma. You cannot depend upon the Dharma unless you depend upon yourself. The two are really inseparable. They're really two ways of looking at the same thing. But here the Buddha mentions only "with self as island": he's stressing the aspect of self-reliance and self-dependence and self-sufficiency. Any other epithet that hasn't been mentioned before?

Chintamani: Have we had "rapt muser fain"?

S: Where's that?

Chintamani: 503.

S: "Rapt muser fain". The "rapt muser" is the meditator of course. It's this word "muse" again, presumably for "jhana". "Yo vedagu jhanarato satima," yes. We haven't had this "jhanarato". It's really one who delights in jhana. Jhana is of course dhyana, in the sense of the samadhi state, the superconscious state. Usually four dhyanas are enumerated you may remember, you know, the ones illustrated by the four similes. So the Enlightened person here, or the true individual here, is one who delights in the dhyana state, who enjoys meditation you can say. Not meditation in the sense of struggling and sweating to become concentrated, but being

actually poised in a concentrated state, even a state of higher consciousness.

(end of side one)[321]

S: "The haven here for many men". Now what's that? "Saranam bahunnam." It's not quite that, the word is "refuge": "yo vedagu jhanarato satima sambodhipatto saranam bahunnam." This is a quite important expression. "To that one who really knows, to that one who enjoys meditation, to that one who is ever mindful, to that one who has attained Supreme Enlightenment, to that one who is a refuge for many." I mean clearly the Buddha, or a Buddha or an Enlightened One, is referred to. So what do you think is meant by "a refuge for many"? It's the Buddha as object of refuge for many people, yes? In other words the Enlightened One isn't just Enlightened to himself, not just Enlightened for his own sake. He becomes a refuge for many, for many other non-enlightened people, until such time as they gain Enlightenment too.

I think this is the first time there's been any sort of suggestion of that in this particular chapter of the Sutta Nipata: the Buddha as Refuge, apart from the formal Going for Refuge on the part of Bharadvaja. But it's as though the fact that he is an object of Refuge for many people is an integral part of the spiritual ideal itself, or the Enlightened Person himself. Do you see this? The Enlightened person provides a refuge for many. What do you think exactly "refuge" means here? I mean, is this the sort of word you'd naturally use? You know, it's more like source of inspiration or support, a spiritual support, a guide. (pause) Any other term we haven't come across before?

Dave: What's "meed-eager"?

S: Meed-eager. This is a very sort of pseudo-archaic translation. Meed is punya, merit. It's one who is eager for merit, that is, recompense for his good deeds.

Devamitra: Have we gone into "without a future"?

S: No we haven't. The word actually is not really future.

Vimalamitra: That's 499 in the text.

S: "Gati", the text says "gati". Gati is more like, [322] well, literally it means going. You get duggati and sugati, sugata, for instance, from a verb meaning to go. Gati is a place to which you go. So in the case of the Enlightened One there is no place to which he goes, i.e. within the Wheel of Life. He does not go to heaven, he does not go to hell, he does not go to the world of the asuras, he does not go to the world of the animals, does not go to the world of the pretas, does not go to the world of men. He has no gati. Sometimes it's translated as bourne, B-O-U-R-N-E, which is a bit archaic. In other words there's nowhere that he goes to. In other words, he's not reborn. So, in a sense, yes, "without a future". It's not a bad sort of interpretation, though it isn't very literal. It isn't really a literal translation. "He has no going," you know, which is not very idiomatic English. (pause)

Any other phrase or epithet we haven't come across before? There's 'mine'-less. We've dealt with that.

Devamitra: O'ercomers of all "how" and "why".

S: Ah, all how and why. Yes, that's quite important.

Vimalamitra: Where's that?

S: That's page... that's verse 500. Chalmers translates: "done with birth-and-death, and overcome all doubts". No, it isn't really that. (short pause) It's "how" and "why". It's not a bad translation. So in what sense is the Enlightened One said to have overcome all "how" and

"why"? Or rather, it's "wherefore" - it's more like "wherefore".

Devamitra: He's asked (two words unclear) his own questions.

S: But why does one ask a question?

Devamitra: Because you don't know the answer.

S: Not only that; I mean, do you ask just because you don't know the answer?[323]

Phil: It's because you lack confidence.

S: Because you lack confidence. It's often more like that, because you're anxious, because you're bothered. I've talked about this quite a bit recently: that one very often wants to know something not because you need to know it, but because you're anxious. Do you remember this?

Devamitra: I don't remember you...

S: For instance, I gave the example of someone, for instance, who asks you to direct him to a certain place, and you say "You just go to the bottom of the road, you get on a number ten bus, and it'll take you all the way. It takes about twenty minutes." You just say this. So then he says, "How big will the bus be? Is it a double-decker or a single-decker? Are you sure it's a number ten bus? Does it really go all the way? How can I be sure of that? How can I be sure they won't change the service on that day? Are you sure that the bus stop is at the bottom of the road? Does it always stop?" So all these questions, all these hows and whys. What do they indicate?

Devamitra: Well, anxiety.

S: Anxiety. So very often people's questions about the Dharma and about practice and so on are motivated by anxiety of this sort. And very often the more intellectual sort of person has become more intellectual, or has been forced to become more intellectual, through sheer pressure of his anxiety. It is his anxiety and his need to know which has made him intellectually more active, or more subtle, more sophisticated, more refined. And it's very very difficult to satisfy such a person. You need very very sort of subtle, very plausible, very complex answers so that they can't ask any further question. And even then they may not be really satisfied. In other words they may still feel anxious.

Devamitra: Would you equate this state of mind in any way with the sort of state of the doubter, who continually raises a further objection to the answer you give?

S: Yes, yes, right. Very often it takes that form. This is [324] distinct from natural intelligence, which really likes to know why. This is why I used the word "intellectual" rather than just "intelligent person". But you can always tell whether the person is asking questions just because he really wants to know, or because he has a neurotic need to be certain. You get just a different sort of feel of the question, of the questioner. I mean, has anyone ever noticed this?

Devamitra: I've noticed it in myself asking questions, but I don't think I've noticed it in other people specifically asking me. It's difficult to sort of see it in other people, I think. I at least mean I find it difficult.

Chintamani: I've noticed that that those two beings are actually within myself, and the anxious ... usually one feels a bit as if something... it feels as if you shouldn't be asking it.

S: Well you're not asking because you want to know, you're asking because you want to be reassured - perhaps not even about that particular matter about which you're asking, maybe

about something quite different. I mean it does seem to me that looking back and reading some of these old Pali texts (based of course on the oral tradition) one gets the impression that people were less anxious in those days. They needed to know less, or - you know - didn't feel such a great need to know. Do you see what I mean? But it's as though with the progress of civilization and whatever, people need to know more, even in India, where - in the end - Buddhists were giving very, very complex and sophisticated answers to various questions, because the questions themselves had become more and more sophisticated and complex.

Ratnapani: One can imagine what either of these brahmins would have put the Buddha through with a modern sort of a mind. They wouldn't have gone for Refuge after just a short exchange.

S: Yes, right.

Devamitra: Yes, but people do know more, so maybe that's why they need to know even more. I mean, they know more in the sense that they have more information and they know there's a greater [325] world-wide communication, and...

S: Yes, there is that. Though from a spiritual point of view it's largely irrelevant. And even so they feel it has a certain relevance and they try to bring that sort of knowledge or that sort of information into play.

Chintamani: You also talked about how if you talk about... you can talk about something continually as if you're committing yourself to doing something about it. You can talk something into the ground.

S: Yes. (pause) And there is the point - the very important point - that you can never base your action on perfect knowledge. Do you see this point?

Devamitra: The fact that you can't take every conceivable condition into consideration?

S: No that isn't possible is it? So what does that mean? You have to take a slight risk, or you have to have a certain amount of faith, otherwise the person who asks about the bus: "How can I be sure that I'll get to the bottom of the road? Can you guarantee me that?" Well, you can't. I mean he has to go just out of faith that he'll get there in the end. So it seems as though the more faith you have, the less reassurance you need and the more quickly and easily you'll get started. If you've got a very active, subtle mind - if you're a bit of an intellectual - you'll need quite a bit of preliminary information and reassurance, before you'll allow yourself to get started. And you can actually, in chronic cases, keep up the game indefinitely and never get started because you're never able to make that small step, that small act of almost commitment, or at least of faith.

I mean, for instance, if someone comes along to the meditation class - you might even have had this experience in some degree, sometimes - and suppose they listen to all your instructions - and they say, "Well, suppose I can't meditate, suppose I can't concentrate, what shall I do?" And you say, "Oh, you do this and you do that." [326] Then they say, "Suppose it doesn't work?" "Well try it." "But suppose it doesn't work, what shall I do then?" "All right, if it doesn't work you try such and such method." "But suppose that doesn't work." They think they've really got you then, and they'll suppose we'll have to prove that it will work, to their complete satisfaction, before they'll even start meditating. Well, what can you do?

Devamitra: Well, just refuse to answer their questions.

S: Yes, exactly.

Vimalamitra: You could say, "If you want it to work, it will work."

S: Ah, but they will say - this is the sort of discussion they love - "But I do want it, but I just

want to be sure. That's why I want to be sure, because I want it so much. I don't want to waste my time. I want to make sure that I really am on the right path, so I'd like you to prove it first. I really want to meditate. It's the thing that I most want to do in the world." This is the sort of exchange that they really enjoy. I mean, while the class is held up, you're feeling a bit of a fool perhaps. So you have to be able to recognize this quite quickly and cut it short. I mean nowadays of course people are not going to be satisfied with your immediate explanation or your first answer to their question. That's only to be expected, and accepted. But if they go on too long and this sort of note of neurotic anxiety creeps into their questions, then you should be quite careful and not carry on too long afterwards. Just get them started as quickly as possible, and not sort of bring forth theoretical arguments. Just say, "Well, look. You seem to be a pretty average human being. There are lots of other people around like you. They get on with it quite well. I see no reason why you shouldn't." Put it, in a way, in a plain matter of fact way like that. You could even say, "It just seems to work. We don't really know why, but we do know that it works. Just try it. I can't prove that it's going to work, but I just know that it will, I mean, if you make the same sort of effort that others make." I suppose they could bring objections to that: "Well how do you know that I am the same as other people? I might just be the exception, yes? I mean, there are exceptions to every [327] rule after all." (laughter)

Devamitra: The times you hear that, actually. That's incredible. You know, you sort of... the number of people who want to be exceptions to the general rule.

S: Or to make exceptions to the general rule.

Devamitra: Obviously some of them must be exceptions, but you just hear it so frequently you can't help feeling a bit sceptical.

S: Especially when it's with regard to things that they really need to do in order to develop. "Maybe everybody else has to get rid of the five hindrances if they want to meditate, but not me. There are exceptions to every rule."

Chintamani: (inaudible comment)

S: I once had a young Turk like that at a - literally a young Turk - at a group I addressed at Imperial College many years ago. And he said he was quite convinced that he could gain nirvana by uninterrupted sexual indulgence. So he thought he'd really got me there, so I said, "Fine. If you really believe that, go ahead. And when you've got nirvana in that way, come and tell us all about it." (laughter) He didn't know what to say then. He thought I was going to argue with him about it. (pause) Right. Any other term or epithet we've not dealt with before? (pause)

Dave: Has he talked about "error" before?

S: Error. Not quite. Which verse is that?

Dave: 493.

S: I don't think he has, unless he's giving a different translation of the same word. Ah, no, we have talked about. It's [328] moha. We did talk about moha: one of the three unskillful roots. Here he's translating it as "error", before he translated it as something else I think. So it's bewilderment, mental confusion, stupefaction - a very powerful word indeed, moha. It's delusion too, spiritual blindness. I've said that in this particular passage the Buddha doesn't go so high in his description of the Enlightened mind as he went before. Do you notice this? He doesn't say anything about not knowing the self by the self, for instance. So we'll see perhaps why it is he doesn't go quite so far with this young brahmin as he went with the other brahmin. All right. Let's carry on.

(504) Surely my quest was not in vain;
Of the gift-worthy thou hast told!

Indeed thou knowest this as so,
For thine's this Dharma, found and known.

S: Right. Carry on.

(505) Then spake the brahman once again:
"Goodman who merit needs and seeks,
The ready almoner who here
Gives unto others food and drink,
Pray tell me, sir, wherein for him
Lieth success in offering."

S: Why do you think Magha is virtually repeating his question? (pause)

Dick: Is it because he hasn't understood what the Buddha has said?

S: Maybe not.

Devamitra: I thought that it might have been something else actually. Maybe he's got some intimation of what the Buddha's saying, that it realizes another way of making an offering.

S: Yes. Or he realizes the Buddha has something more to say to him. Well, in fact the Buddha has. So let's go on to that because this is quite important.[329]

(506) "Magha, make offering," he said,
"But in so doing, cleanse thy heart
In all its ways. To th'offerer
The offering is the help; by this
Supported, he doth then quit hate.

(507) With passion gone and hate expelled,
Let him in boundless measure then
Quicken a heart of amity,
E'er day and night with zeal suffuse
All quarters to infinitude."

S: So what is the Buddha saying here? He's making a quite important statement. He's saying, "Magha, make offering." I mean, carry on as before, make all these offerings that you've been accustomed to making, "but in so doing, cleanse thy heart in all its ways." So, how should he do that? ""To th'offerer the offering is the help by this supported, he doth then quit hate."

So Magha, apparently, was under the impression that by making all these offerings he was doing good to other people and heaping up merit for himself. But the Buddha is saying that is not the real value, that is not the real purpose of the offering, the real meaning of the offering. So he says go on making the offerings, but cleanse your heart in all its ways and realize that by making these offerings, making these gifts, whether to other people or to the Enlightened Ones, you are only helping yourself. By the practice of generosity, you help yourself. You're not so much helping others. And how do you help yourself? Because by virtue of this practice you overcome your feeling of hate. And having got rid of hate, having got rid of craving, you can start developing metta towards all beings. This is what the Buddha is saying. So he's trying to change Magha's perspective, yes? He's trying to get Magha to attend more to the psychological aspect of what he is doing. (long pause)

So he's trying to lead him from the practice of generosity to the getting rid of hatred, the getting rid of craving, and then, more positively, the practice of metta, friendliness, towards all living beings. (pause) I take it that everyone knows that metta is one of the four [330] brahma viharas, as they're called. Do you know what the other three are? Is this familiar ground to everybody?

Phil: Equanimity, compassion, and joy.

S: Yes, they're usually enumerated as metta - friendliness - then karuna or compassion, then mudita or sympathetic joy, and then equanimity. Equanimity is the last: upeksa.

Dick: What was sympathetic joy?

S: Mudita.

Dick: And equanimity?

S: Upekkha in Pali. I think we ought to go into these a little bit. Metta or maitri is, of course, the feeling of friendliness towards all. Friendliness is the nearest we can get to the word in English if you want to translate it literally, but it's a much more powerful and much more positive emotion than what we usually understand by the word friendliness. Sometimes metta is translated as love, but that is a very ambiguous, not to say ambivalent, word, which is probably best avoided in this context. Essentially metta or friendliness is an ardent desire for the happiness, the true happiness, and progress, of the person or persons to whom it is directed: an ardent desire that they should grow. But sometimes it's translated as good will, which is not bad except that it is rather weak. You could say disinterested love. Do you think this conveys the meaning or spirit better? Disinterested love? It's not a possessive love, not a selfish love. If one has to use this word at all, a disinterested love. (pause)

So,

With passion gone and hate expelled,
Let him in boundless measure then
Quicken a heart of amity.

This is a quite accurate translation. But what the Buddha says is, "So vitarago, pavineyya dosam, mettam cittam bhavayam appamanam," which sounds a bit different or conveys a different impression.

"Mettam cittam" which means the friendly mind or the friendly heart; "bhavanam": let him develop; "appamanam": to an unlimited extent. This is the literal translation.[331]

(Quoting Pali, then...) "day and night mindfully". So appamanam is considered very important - that it should be developed, the metta citta or the mind or heart of metta should be developed without limit. This is why, in the course of the actual practice, the method is that we start off with self, then friend, then neutral person, then enemy, then all four together, and then you gradually try to widen the scope until the object of the metta becomes all living beings whatsoever. But do you think this is literally possible? What do you think is meant by this?

Chintamani: I remember you saying that metta in fact isn't directed towards anybody in particular; that the idea is to get a flow going that goes constantly out towards everything.

S: So what is the purpose of thinking first of this person, then of that person and so on?

Vimalamitra: To get it going first, get the energy going.

S: To get it going.

Vimalamitra: It always seems in the practice that it's the last stage that requires the most energy.

S: Yes, or which evokes the most energy.

Vimalamitra: Yes. It depends on how successful your previous...

S: Yes. So it's not that you've got literally all the beings in the world sort of visualized before you and you're then making them all the object of your metta and you're aware of each one individually. This is impossible. But it means that there is that infinitely expanding flow. The flow goes just on and on. Whomsoever you think of, well the metta arises more and more. It just goes on expanding. So it is this infinitely expanding metta that is intended here. This is the state that one should develop and cultivate. So in a sense also, one may say - or it is said - that metta ultimately has no object. Do you see what is meant? It is a state. I mean you start off by developing that state, or cultivating that state, by reference to [332] a specific object or succession of objects. But once you get into the actual experience of the metta - you know, once the metta gets really flowing - you don't need to direct it towards anybody in particular.

Vimalamitra: So if you get it going quite early on in the meditation, or even if you sit down and it's already flowing, you don't need to go into those stages.

S: You don't need to go into those stages except, perhaps, to strengthen that flow, if you feel that that needs to be done. So then you are in a state of metta, but without the metta being directed to any person in particular. So if you happen to come into contact with some person, or be brought into contact with some person, the metta would naturally express itself towards that person. It will affect your behaviour towards that person. So you see that metta is fully developed only when it isn't directed towards anyone in particular. It's a state of mind that you experience, or state of mind and heart. It's just like we were saying about the concentration which goes on after the concentration object drops away, that is, after the point of sensation of the breath drops away and you're no longer aware of it, but the concentration goes on. In the same way you no longer think about individual beings, but the metta goes on. And if you happen to encounter any particular being, then the metta just falls onto that being. It's just like the sun shining, yes? The sun just goes on shining, and the rays of the sun pass throughout space. If a planet happens to get in the way, then the light of the sun falls on the planet, otherwise not - otherwise it just goes on streaming through space. In the same way, if someone comes in the way of your waves of metta, well they receive them, and you're said to direct metta to them. But if nobody comes in your way, well metta just goes on infinitely as it were throughout space.

So, "...E'er day and night with zeal suffuse all quarters to infinitude." (long pause) So you can see what the Buddha is saying to Magha? He says make offerings. Go on making offerings to the people that you were making offerings to before - to the Buddha, to the Enlightened One - but in so doing cleanse your heart in all its ways. Realize that it is the offerer, the giver, who is helped, rather [333] than the recipients; because by virtue of this practice of generosity, he gets rid of all hate. In fact he gets rid of passion. And with passion and hate both expelled, then he's in a position to develop metta, friendliness, loving-kindness or disinterested love, towards all living beings, "day and night, to infinitude". In fact the text doesn't say "to all living beings"; it simply says to infinity, to infinitude, to all quarters.

While we're on the topic, any general question about the metta bhavana? (pause) I mean it's useful, it is self-evident, no doubt. The only thing is that one must get on with it, but what about those other brahma viharas? We haven't said anything about them. I mean perhaps they too should be practised sometimes, though it is significant that the other bhavanas are to be practised with the metta bhavana having been practised first. That is the basis of the other three. For instance, karuna bhavana - how does that differ from the metta bhavana?

Voice: There's some sort of direction, as it were, downwards.

S: As it were downwards, yes.

Voice: Whereas the metta is on the same level.

S: Yes, so what makes it directed downwards? On account of what do you say that it is

directed downwards?

Chintamani: A need.

S: Umm.

Vimalamitra: The person who is concerned - he'd have to be Enlightened or he's have to be... have had some kind of insight or wisdom to be compassionate.

S: Yes, but what about the people to whom the compassion is directed? What do you know about them - by virtue of the fact that the word "compassion" is used?[334]

Ratnapani: Well, they're suffering and they're less developed than you are.

S: Right. They're in a state of suffering or they're less developed. So it is said that karuna, or compassion, is simply the feeling of metta itself when that feeling is directed towards, or falls upon, those who are less fortunate than yourself in some way or other. Then the metta takes on as it were the colouring of compassion. So without metta, no karuna. That is very, very important, yes? If you don't get a strong metta to begin with, then your so-called compassion may be just a sense of superiority, or maybe just a sort of superior pity, just a looking down on other people and feeling sorry for them, in a rather patronizing sort of way. There must be love - to use that word. Without metta, no karuna. I mean, some people, strange to say, they can feel what they think is compassion and pity for others as long as they're suffering. But when they come out of their suffering, they find it very difficult to love them when they are no longer suffering.

Chintamani: They hate them.

S: So this is really strange. So it shows that that compassion was not true compassion, because as soon as the suffering is relieved and the particular person is no longer suffering, then the emotion you have towards them is just pure and simple metta. But when they suffer, their suffering suffuses your metta, and it becomes karuna. So if someone that you feel metta towards suffers, then your metta is transformed into karuna, which means you want to try to help to do something to relieve their suffering. But supposing they are not suffering; supposing they are happy, really happy: then as your metta as it were touches them, what is it transformed into then?

Voice: Sympathetic joy.

S: Sympathetic joy, yes. So in this way metta is the basis both of karuna, compassion, and mudita, sympathetic joy. If you can't rejoice with others, if you can't feel happiness in their happiness, then you've no love for them, you've no friendliness towards them, no metta. So metta, karuna, mudita. These are all really closely interconnected, aren't they? That's clear. But your sort of basic [335] emotional state should be one of metta. And then according to whether people suffer, or whether people are happy, it will be suffused with little shades - little darker patches as it were - of karuna, or brighter patches of mudita. But underneath there will be the metta all the time.

Dave: Doesn't devotion come into this?

S: Ah, devotion, of course, is with regards to those who are as it were above. Yes, you could say, even, that if you look up with love then your love becomes reverence and devotion - saddha or bhakti.

Devamitra: There's a definite difference of tone of each, isn't there?

S: Yes, right, yes. So Buddhas obviously feel karuna, or compassion, towards all living beings, because they're not Enlightened. An unenlightened person is not in a position to feel

compassion towards all living beings - only perhaps towards those who are less Enlightened than himself. In the same way a Buddha does not feel devotion, in a sense.

Devamitra: But didn't you say that... I think I heard you say that the Buddha, after his Enlightenment, looked up to the Dharma.

S: That's true. That is why I said "in a sense". Though again, the Dharma is indistinguishable from the Buddha himself; he has realized the Dharma. Or again, in a way, the Dharma was there before him - though, again: in a sense. But it is true. There's a different tone to friendliness, compassion, and sympathetic joy, though I emphasize that the basic state is friendliness. So it's sometimes said that each of these brahma viharas has a near enemy and a far enemy. Have you heard me talk about this before? Some of you have. Do you remember what those near and far enemies are?

Aloka: Isn't the near enemy of metta, affection?[336]

S: Affection, in the sense of attachment. Yes. You can think that you're feeling friendliness or metta, though in fact you're simply attached. And what is the far enemy? Obviously that is anger or hatred. And then the near and far enemies of compassion?

Voice: Pity.

S: Sentimental pity, yes, or even superior pity, patronizing pity. And the far enemy?

Voice: Cruelty.

S: It is cruelty or malice. And then what about sympathetic joy, what is the near enemy of that?

Devamitra: Indulgence?

S: Well I always say vicarious satisfaction.

Devamitra: Can you elaborate?

S: Well, what is vicarious satisfaction?

Devamitra: Sort of standing apart, seeing somebody else's... sort of gaining pleasure out of somebody else's...

S: Yes.[337]

Devamitra: ... feeling, that you are unable to feel yourself.

S: Yes. But you get that pleasure for yourself, yes? You are not happy that they are happy. Full stop. You are, as it were, imagining yourself in their position, and trying to suck some enjoyment for yourself from the fact of their enjoyment. This is vicarious satisfaction. You know, like when you go to see a blue film. It's that sort of thing isn't it?

Chintamani: Emotional voyeurism.

S: Yes. There's quite a lot of this sort of thing around in grosser and more refined forms.

David: It sounds like identifying with the hero and that.

S: Yes, instead of being a bit heroic yourself. And what is the far enemy of sympathetic joy?

Voice: Jealousy.

S: Jealousy. You resent the fact that others are happy. You don't like to see them happy. It makes you feel bad.

Dick: What was the far enemy of karuna?

S: Cruelty or malice. Right then, what about equanimity? We haven't said anything about equanimity. How does equanimity arise? It's very important to realize that equanimity too is based upon metta. As well, therefore, indirectly upon the compassion and sympathetic joy. But why is it important to realize that equanimity is based upon metta?

Vimalamitra: (two or three words unclear) suppose it isn't just a dead feeling.[338]

S: It isn't just a dead feeling. Sometimes this word upeksha has been translated in the past as indifference rather than equanimity. But why do you think that isn't a satisfactory translation?

Ratnapani: It suggests one doesn't care.

S: It suggests that one doesn't care.

Devamitra: So, is indifference then the near enemy to ...

S: One could say that, yes, it is the near enemy.

Ratnapani: It seems like a hovering, suspended metta...

S: Umm.

Ratnapani: ...ready to blow in any of these directions.

S: No, it's not even that. It's more than that, in a way. I mean, what is the nature of the connection between metta and equanimity? Or how does one pass from metta to equanimity? Or, what is equanimity? First of all let's see that. What do you mean by equanimity?

Vimalamitra: Well, peace.

S: Peace. Yes, but can you be more explicit?

Vimalamitra: Well, it's ... there's nothing to disturb you.

S: Nothing to disturb you. What is the form your disturbance usually takes?

Ratnapani: Emotional instability.

S: Emotional instability - what form does that usually take? It usually takes the form of going from one extreme to the other, doesn't it? So, equanimity is a state of balance, or poise, or serenity. It's all these things. It's also a state of even-mindedness, or same-mindedness. This comes out very strongly in the Mahayana in the case of the Bodhisattva ideal - that the Bodhisattva has the same mind [339] towards all living beings: samatha-citta, even-mindedness, same-mindedness. Which doesn't mean he's equally indifferent to all; they're equally concerned for all. So equanimity is more like this.

Phil: That's when you have an equal amount of metta to all.

S: Exactly, yes. This is the nature of the connection. So how do you proceed from metta to equanimity? You cultivate metta towards all equally, so that you don't love some more and others less, or feel more friendly towards some and less friendly towards others, which means also that you're equally compassionate towards all, and rejoice equally in the happiness of all. So you proceed from metta - and therefore also from karuna and mudita - to upeksha by

cultivating the element of sameness in your attitude of metta. This is the same metta equally towards all. By cultivating that element of sameness and equality more and more, you arrive progressively at a state of equilibrium and balance and even-mindedness without preferences, not because you're equally indifferent but because you're equally concerned, not because you don't love anybody but because you love everybody.

Ratnapani: Insight is implied here, isn't it?

S: Insight is implied too - yes, this is a very important point. To the extent that there is a feeling or experience of equality, to that extent there is insight. The Theravadins, incidentally, maintain that the brahma viharas are entirely samatha-type practices - that they do not contain any element of insight. The Mahayana, I think, would disagree with that. I personally disagree with that because to the extent that there is an element of sameness, experience of sameness, to that extent there is an element of insight, because to that extent you've penetrated into, or experienced, the truth of anatta, selflessness. So this is as it were the more positive way: to cultivate equal love, equal compassion, equal sympathetic joy, thereby equanimity. And it's quite interesting that in some Pali texts upeksa (or equanimity) is, or becomes, a synonym for [340] nirvana itself. You remember the series of the seven bodhyangas? I think I've mentioned them in "Mind Reactive and Creative". So the seventh and last is upeksa, equanimity. So it's with equanimity in this ultimate sense that you're balanced, with regard to even - in Mahayana terms - samsara and nirvana. Even those two extremes don't disturb you. Subject and object: they're as it were the same, or not different, as far as you are concerned. So you're not disturbed as between these pairs of opposites either. You're in a state of absolute equanimity, or as I think I've said somewhere or other, axiality and centrality. You've reached what the Chinese mystics sometimes call the unwobbling pivot (laughter) of existence. You don't wobble any more. As the Hui Neng Sutra says "citta yasa na kamapati": "whose mind does not shake" when touched by the eight lokadhammas, which are four pairs of opposites: pleasure and pain, loss and gain, and so on. You're in a state of absolute equanimity; which means also, as I said, centrality and axiality. Do you know what I mean by axiality? You feel as though you're the axis upon which everything turns, though not in an egotistical sense, but that you're absolutely stable and unshakeable, immovable; though at the same time you're supremely mobile, even dancing about all over the place; you don't need to have your centre fixed in any particular spot; your centre is everywhere.

Vimalamitra: Because your security is everywhere.

S: Your security is everywhere. Everything is your security.

Ratnapani: You own it all.

S: You own it. You feel equally secure everywhere. So equanimity certainly isn't anything like indifference, is it? Equanimity is nirvana itself. Equanimity is Enlightenment itself. The mind doesn't sway, doesn't wobble, doesn't go to any extreme, is poised on the highest possible level.

(pause)[341]

Chintamani: Is there a near and far enemy of...?

S: Well, of equanimity in the absolute sense there can't be, obviously. (pause) You could say there's another pair of near and far enemies of equanimity in the more relative sense. The far enemy would be simple restlessness, and the near enemy would be stagnation.

Devamitra: Why those two?

S: Well, there's some people who look full of equanimity but are just lazy. They don't bother. No energy.

Devamitra: I was just thinking it would, I was expecting it to be more in emotional terms. Like, for instance, I would have thought that, say, romantic love is the far enemy.

S: Of what?

Devamitra: Of equanimity.

S: Romantic love?

Devamitra: Yes.

S: The far enemy? It's one of the far enemies? Or it's one of the enemies, anyway.

Devamitra: Well, just because it is...

S: Well it is a form of restlessness, so if you say that restlessness is the far enemy then you include romantic love to the extent that romantic love also is a restless state. Or any emotion is a far enemy, because all emotions are rather restless by nature, or worldly emotions, anyway. You know, fear is very disturbing, anger is very disturbing... (pause)

Anyway, one can see the importance of these four, what I call positive emotions, that is to say, metta, karuna, mudita, upekkha. [342] And there is also, of course, the emotion of saddha. I mean this, perhaps, also should be included. And here you get the five Buddhist cardinal emotions, if one could term them. So it's very, very important that one makes an effort to develop all these.

Voice: What is saddha?

S: Faith, or devotion even, or confidence even. Quite a few people, of course, experience a bit of difficulty with the metta. That's well known, isn't it? Perhaps even more than with the mindfulness of breathing. (pause)

So the Buddhist should be as it were radiating friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, to say nothing of faith. These five should make up the characteristic Buddhist emotional atmosphere. And, actually, you find that this is so sometimes. You find it quite often in the East, I would say; in the Buddhist East. More often than one might think.

Ratnapani: There's not... I gather that there isn't a great deal of sort of meditation done, but does ...sort of atmosphere still pervade just from the quiet life?

S: It very often does, not only from the quiet life but from a life of active good will, a lot of dana and generosity, yes, a lot of hospitality, a lot of friendly communication. One mustn't associate the development of these things exclusively with the sitting meditation practice; certainly not just confine them to the meditation room.

Ratnapani: If anything I seem to have, in the last few years or whatever of my Buddhist life, seem to have made ... I have got it together less in the shrine room than elsewhere, than say I have at Sukhavati with other people.

Devamitra: That's something I find, actually, that one's experience outside the shrine room is generally very happy and positive, [343] but inside the shrine room there's a lot of resistance and dullness. I mean, why is that?

S: Well, perhaps it's to some extent due to the fact in the shrine room really you're left to yourself.

Devamitra: But I think, I mean I can feel pretty happy and positive on my own.

S: If you're not meditating?

Devamitra: Yes. (laughter) Well, if I'm not doing an actual practice.

Aloka: I think you are sort of confronted more in the actual...

S: I think this is what it is.

Chintamani: From that point of view, actually I seem to have got worse over the last few years; well presumably I notice it more.

S: Well, you confront it more.

Ratnapani: Confront what?

S: Well, the inner emptiness or whatever. (pause) But also it is a question of, you know, of honestly trying to see what are the situations which do help you to be positive. And they may not necessarily be the conventional ones, or the standard religious ones, as it were. You know, if you do find that communicating with your friends puts you into a more positive, genuinely positive, frame of mind than meditating, well then you have to allow quite an important place to communicating with your friends, and at the same time trying to get on with the meditation. But you need to be able to be happy and concentrated when you're on your own and as it were meditating, as well as when you are with others. In fact the more you can be like that on your [344] own, the more you can be, in the long run, when you are with others.

Devamitra: I must say that I've found once or twice, it's quite remarkable - the sort of... the difference in the feeling even having very, just a very quiet but very positive communication with somebody and then shortly afterwards going off to meditate, it's all gone! You know, I have experienced that.

S: I think the experience you get in connection with meditation, the sitting relatively on your own, when you do get it, is much more refined than what you experience with other people. Usually. You know, there may be exceptions.

Devamitra: So, would you... is it possible then to almost not notice it, would you say, or is that not...

S: No, I'm not saying that. But when you... though it is very refined, it is more noticeable than ever. But when you're with others, even though there may be a very good feeling of metta with other people there is a certain coarseness because it's accompanied by physical movements, it's accompanied by sounds, i.e. speech. You're not all that concentrated. There is a certain warmth, a certain good will, but it's not usually very refined - unless you're all being very, very mindful indeed and virtually in a meditative state. For when you get into that state of friendliness and metta when you're meditating on your own without distractions, it may be much more difficult to achieve, but when you do get into it, it's a very much more refined experience. And of course, all the more intense for being more refined. I don't exclude the possibility that with perhaps one or two other people you can have an experience of friendliness as refined as what you get when you're meditating on your own. But this does suggest great mindfulness and sensitivity on the part of all concerned. And not any just sort of crude jokiness or anything of that sort. It's a quite different kind of experience.[345]

Devamitra: You know, the specific occasions I have in mind, in fact, were the odd periods when we'd been talking quietly and lapsed into quite a long silence, you know quite naturally; and it was just very, very powerful emotional experience of metta.

S: I'm quite sure, that one can experience. You ought to be able... I mean the experience ought not to depend on the other person. If it is your state, the state you remain in when even the other person is subtracted from the situation, you should just remain full of metta.

Chintamani: I would like to add to that, that from my own experience, I know the sort of situation we're talking about, and undoubtedly at times it has been real metta; but more often than not it has been one of two things. One, it's been pema masquerading as metta, that effectively was dependent upon the other person and that subsequently I sought out that person for more of that because it made me feel more positive than I actually really was. And also it's been enjoyment of the other person's positivity, which you've taken to be your own. I'm not saying it was with you, but in certain cases. But because somebody's really open and warm and giving, association with that person is a very pleasant experience and you take it to be your own positivity, which is in fact, minimal.

S: Yes. In other words, you use another person's positivity to hide from yourself the fact of your own negativity; and you're enjoying their positivity instead of developing your own positivity and relating to their positivity through yours. (pause)

When you're relating to another person's positivity through your positivity, when they go away you're still left in a positive state. But if you're just feeding on their positivity and they go away, you're left with your own negativity. I mean there are all sorts of intermediate gradations. You may be feeling slightly down - not really negative - and you just, when you come into contact with someone who's really positive, or seek out someone who's positive, and they may help you [346] actually to become positive. Not that you're simply feeding on their positivity, but they may just bring you up to their level, and you may then become positive. This too is possible. This is quite valid, quite legitimate. (pause)

But the general rule is that if you are happy with other people - really happy - you ought to be able to be happy on your own too. But if you can't be happy on your own, you probably won't be happy with other people - not in the true sense. I mean, the more happy you are on your own, or can be on your own, the more happy you'll be with other people.

Voice: Metta, I think, would probably be very good for the development of that.

S: Yes. Anyway, you see the importance of developing this emotionally positive state. You know, for this last year or so I've been really sort of harping on that. I think some people know that unless one can be in the emotionally positive state, very little spiritual progress is possible. It's very important that people should get themselves into this emotionally positive state to begin with. I say to begin with, but, you know, it's almost half the battle. And feel good towards yourself, feel friendly towards yourself, as well as to others. And have warm outward-going emotions, be cheerful and positive and happy. And rejoice in the merits of others. Don't always be carping and critical and envious and mean and grasping.

David: How closely connected to metta is openness?

S: What do you mean by openness?

David: Well, for instance, someone says "I can get on with somebody else because they're [?not] open".

S: Well openness usually means there's a free flow of communication from them to you - which also implies metta. I think you can't really [347] communicate with somebody unless you really like them. If you don't really like them you won't want to communicate. You won't feel that outflow of energy towards them. Like when you really hate someone you don't really want to speak to him at all, except, perhaps, to tell him that you hate his guts. (laughter) (pause)

Of course, being friendly or expressing friendliness doesn't mean being all gushing and exuberant and sort of falling over people, or anything like that. It can be quite sober, quite quiet and steady. There's nothing theatrical about it.

Ratnapani: We've had that stage, haven't we...

S: Um...

Ratnapani: ...in the Movement generally?

S: Yes, in a mild sort of way, some had, yes. On the other hand you mustn't sort of over-generalize and say, well, you should never be very expressive or demonstrative. Some people are just by nature. They're not reticent and taciturn. (pause) If it is a stage or a phase I wonder whether, you know (laughing) has really entered it or just everybody goes through it.

Devamitra: I don't think, I can go, I could get out of it!

Ratnapani: I don't mean genuine exuberance, but the false variety exuberance without the feeling.

S: Yes, I think there was a little of that years ago. Well, any further points about the four brahma viharas? They're also sometimes called the four infinite states. (long pause)

All right, let's go on then and hear what Magha has to say next. [348] Let's go on with Magha's questions.

(508) Pray, who is cleansed, awoken, freed?
How to Brahm's world goes man by self?
Tell me who know not; tell me, sage,
Thus asked! Thou art my witness, lord!
Brahm have I seen today! For us
Thou truly art "the peer of Brahm!"
How rises man, O shining One,
Unto the very world of Brahm?

S: So you see the young Brahmin, though impressed by what the Buddha had to say, is still thinking very much in terms of his existing beliefs. Many of the Brahmins worshipped Brahma - one can say very roughly God - and the ultimate aim of the spiritual life, the brahmachariya, as they saw it, was to attain union with Brahma, or to attain to the world of Brahma, which was a sort of heavenly state. According to the Buddha's teaching that was not the highest state; that was only the highest state of the mundane, the highest sphere or plane within the Wheel of Life, nirvana being beyond. But he didn't deny there was such a world as the Brahma world, and that one could be reborn there, that one could live there, that one could experience that even in this life. He only denied that it was the highest state or the highest experience, or that it was in fact transcendental. According to him it was essentially mundane, however of a very refined and sublime nature - but not nirvana.

So the young Brahmin is asking the Buddha these questions with this in mind. So first he says as it were, in a very general way, please tell me who is cleansed, who is cleansed of all defilements, who is freed from all bondage, who has awoken to Truth? And then he says, "How to Brahm's world goes man by self?": Tell me, how does a man achieve, how does a man attain to, the world of Brahma himself, personally. "Tell me who know not; tell me sage, Thus asked! Thou art my witness Lord! Brahm have I seen today. For us Thou truly art the peer of Brahm!" In other words he, like the previous Brahmin, regards the Buddha as incarnating his [349] own particular religious ideal with all its limitations. He sees the Buddha as Brahma. If you like, he sees the Buddha as God. He doesn't see him as Buddha. So then he says,

"How rises man, O shining One,
Unto the very world of Brahm?"

This epithet "shining one" is interesting. He addresses the Buddha as jutama, which means the one who is full of light, or, if you like, the radiant one, which is quite suggestive in this context of metta radiating, friendliness radiating. Incidentally, you remember that the four

brahma viharas are Brahma viharas - so it's not unexpected that though the Buddha doesn't term metta bhavana as a brahma vihara, it's not unexpected that the young brahmin makes that translation from hearing about metta to asking about Brahma because there is a sort of connection between them: through the practice of metta you go to the Brahmaloaka. In other words the state of metta, subjectively, corresponds to the sphere of Brahma, objectively. So, Magha is seeing the Buddha as the embodiment of his own religious ideal, seeing him as Brahma, and is asking him the way, as it were, to the Brahmaloaka, because surely he knows the way. So what does the Buddha say in reply?

(509) "Who offers, Magha" he replied,
"The offering threefold endowed,
He would make offerings prosperous
By giving to gift-worthy men;
And rightly minded, offering thus,
The ready almoner doth rise
Unto the world of Brahm, I say."

S: So what does the Buddha say? In a word, he says one goes to the world of Brahma by generosity. Generosity is the way to the world of Brahma. It implies, of course, that behind the generosity there is real love, real metta. And he speaks of the "offering threefold endowed"; it's not quite clear what that means. Probably it refers to the three characteristics of a gift. That the gift should be made to the right person: the worthy recipient; that it should be made in the right spirit; and also at the right time and place. Probably it refers to this, to [350] these three. (pause)

So the Buddha is saying, in effect, that he who out of a spirit of metta, of real friendliness, real disinterested love, makes offerings, is generous, giving to the right person, the worthy recipient, in the right spirit and at the right time and place, that person will surely get to a higher state. Though from the Buddha's point of view, a higher state which is still within the mundane, so which does not go beyond the mundane. And apparently Magha is quite satisfied with that. In other words, this young brahmin doesn't go as far as the previous brahmin in his questions, in the attitude and approach.

Aloka: The Buddha's not sort of pushed it any further.

S: He's not pushed it any further, no. Perhaps he sees that Magha can't take any more; that he can get as far as the world of Brahma but no further, at least not for the time being.

Ratnapani: One got that impression of a question of a simple boastful person at the beginning.

S: Yes. So Magha seems much more like the devotee. Now you notice at the end it says, "And when he had thus spoken, brahman Magha said, "'Tis amazing, Master Gotama," dot dot dot - which presumably means et cetera - "We go to Master Gotama for Refuge from this day forth to life's end." I don't know whether Hare has left something out, and the text in Chalmers doesn't help, but it may be he simply goes for Refuge to the Buddha, not to the Dharma and not to the Sangha. And does not go forth and win acceptance; which would be in keeping, if that was so, with his whole attitude. He is the devotee. He is devoted rather than committed, yes? He stays where he was. He stays within his existing religious framework, though greatly venerating the Buddha. And though greatly admiring the Buddha, and following the teaching that he gets from the Buddha, which the Buddha gives in accordance with the limitations of Magha, which limitations he can clearly see. And he even goes for Refuge [351] to the Buddha, but apparently not to Dharma and not to the Sangha. And he doesn't go forth. And he doesn't join the spiritual community.

Devamitra: It also says "from this day forth to life's end," which...

S: Which implies a sort of limitation.

Devamitra: Yes.

S: According to later Buddhist scholastic tradition the Refuges can continue from life to life, but not the precepts, because...

Devamitra: Why is that?

S: You have to take the precepts all over again.

Devamitra: But why?

S: Well, you observe the precepts with your body and you've got a new body. (laughter) This is Buddhist scholastic teaching. But the Refuges are a matter of the mind alone, as it were; so the Refuges go on from life to life but not the precepts. So that if you are ordained as a bhikshu in this life you can't carry that over to the next life, even though you remember it - as, for instance, the Dalai Lama is supposed to remember.

Devamitra: Yes.

S: Or any incarnate lama. They were bhikshus in their previous lives, but they still have to be ordained all over again in their new life, because they've got a new body. It is with the body that you practised the precepts.

Devamitra: What about those pertaining to the mind?

S: Well... the last three? Well, presumably you could carry those over.

Devamitra: But, but...

S: Anyway, don't take this too seriously (laughter) a piece of [352] Buddhist scholasticism from the Middle Ages - the Buddhist Middle Ages of course. But it also shows, you know, what is essential. What is essential goes on from life to life and that is the Refuges, or the Going for Refuge. That is not interrupted, though your particular pattern of observance may vary and you may even take the precepts upon yourself again and again in different forms, but the Refuge continues. (pause)

So Magha, we can say, is devoted rather than committed in our current terminology. He has a limited objective. I mean he is seeking the attainment of the Brahmaloaka - a higher state of peace and happiness and satisfaction within the mundane. He's not seeking nirvana. He's not seeking Enlightenment. And the Buddha is not pushing him - not yet anyway. (long pause)

And also, of course, by developing metta, by practising generosity, Magha is creating a very positive and very solid basis for any further spiritual endeavour he may wish to make later on. It's certainly not time wasted; it's time well spent. But for the time being he apparently doesn't want to go any further than that and is not prepared to consider going any further than that. The brahmin in the previous sutta apparently had a greater spiritual potential - at least within the immediate context of that situation. The Buddha was able to carry him, at least in principle, the whole way - just in the course of that one exchange. Maybe Magha will meet the Buddha again later on or meet one of his disciples; who knows? But for the time being he has set his sights on the Brahmaloaka, and he recognizes the Buddha as one who knows the way to the Brahmaloaka, and can show him the way, and who is in fact the embodiment of that particular ideal himself, though he can't see the Buddha as anything more than that; can't see him as the Buddha. (pause)

All right, any other impressions about this sutta as a whole, especially in comparison with the previous one? This is a young brahmin. Presumably the other brahmin was an elderly brahmin, experienced and well known.[353]

Vimalamitra: He hasn't got as much punch as the...

S: No. No.

Chintamani: He seemed very tied up with etiquette.

S: In what way?

Chintamani: Well it's fairly obvious that then, and probably now, there is a very strict code of behaviour, very much tied up with the ethnic religion; and that the brahmins seem to be very much preoccupied with, well, first of all finding their way within all that: all those codes and patterns of behaviour and also the mastery, and tidy it all up.

S: Yes. More like an admiration for the expert in those things; and from their point of view they took the Buddha as a great expert in those things - which in a way he was. I mean he knew their law, their wisdom. He could play their game if he wanted to. (long pause)

Aloka: There's an amazing sort of contrast between this one and the one before.

S: Um.

Aloka: I can get really overpowered by the one before, but this one shows a completely different sort of approach on the Buddha's part.

S: Yes, as you said, the Buddha doesn't push him. He did rather push the other brahmin, not to say overwhelm him. But, you know, he was able to take it.

David: Perhaps this is more for beginners than...

S: Yes, in a sense, more for the layman, if one uses that sort of later distinction between the monk and the layman. The previous brahmin goes forth and is accepted into the spiritual community. This one, apparently, stays at home. And this one tends to worship the Buddha as [354] God, and that one sees the Buddha as Buddha.

Dave: How many people like Magha turn up in England?

S: I think there are lots of them. They're maybe not wanting to go as far as the Brahmaloaka, but lots of them, in the sense of people who have a limited devotion to the Buddha or to Buddhism and see it in accordance with their existing beliefs and only want to go so far. I think there's quite a lot of people like that. In fact the devoted are always more numerous than the committed.

Ratnapani: I think so far there's been a reluctance... I don't know, a reluctance to admit that "this is my limit and I accept this is my limit" or else just a lack of awareness that everybody has, in fact, got limits to themselves. They're always arguing "No, I'm out for Enlightenment." When it's patently obvious such a person is less - it's worth their while being devoted.

Dick Myers: It seems to be a thing that grows. The more you get into it, your practice, the more you get into Buddhism, the deeper your commitment becomes, the more you...

S: Yes, so one shouldn't discourage people from being devoted. Encourage them: "Be more and more devoted!" In the end the devotion will ripen into commitment. You know, in a way this is almost the Maharishi's approach isn't it? As we were talking about after lunch: Don't disturb the existing framework. Just get people to be a bit devoted, practise a bit of meditation. Perhaps he hopes that in the end, as a [355] result of the natural momentum of the meditation practice, the framework will be broken anyway. He never actually says that, but let's hope he thinks that. Let's hope he hopes that. (pause)

Aloka: In this one that we've just read there's no... There doesn't seem to be any sort of judgement implied on that sort of lesser sort of ideal thing. It's like you're taken that far...

S: And just left.

Aloka: Yes. I mean, what Ratnapani was saying, people now seem to not be able to accept that as just a particular sort of stage that maybe you do have to rest at, for a period.

S: Well I think the difficulty is that people just don't accept that as an ideal, a limited ideal, but they want to insist that they are in fact following the highest ideal. I mean maybe there's no need for them to compare at all. But they don't just keep quiet and get on with their metta, as it were, and their rebirth in the Brahmaloaka; they say that this is, in fact, the way to Enlightenment. "I'm just as much on the path to Enlightenment as you. I'm just as committed as you are." They try to insist on this. This is the difficulty.

Aloka: Does that mean they're trying to pull the higher ideal down?

S: Yes, they're trying to pull the higher down to the level of the lower. And then one has to intervene and make clear the distinction between the two. I mean it's just like the modern Hindu who says that, well, the Buddha is just an incarnation of Vishnu. He's just another Hindu god. They try to pull him down to that level. (pause)

Dick Myers: I've heard it said that Brahma, like sort of union with the Godhead... They say that sort of outlook is sort of synonymous with nirvana. [356] That there is no, you know, like... all paths lead to the same goal eventually.

S: I mean, yes, that is said. Though one must also point out that here it's Brahma, masculine; not Brahman: neuter.

Andy: How do you mean?

S: Well, one must distinguish within the context of Hinduism between Brahma the god, and Brahman, which is usually considered to be the impersonal state. For instance, the Vedanta teaches that Brahman is the ultimate reality, not that Brahma is the ultimate reality, not that the creator god is the ultimate reality, but that the ultimate spiritual principle - which they call Brahman (with an N at the end) - is the ultimate reality. Whether that Brahman ever can be equated with nirvana, that's another matter. But certainly Brahma can't. (pause)

Many of the Pali texts represent the brahmin as being very much preoccupied with the idea of the way to the Brahmaloaka; as having lost the secret of that way and having to ask the Buddha. And the Buddha being able to tell them, but at the same time pointing out that there is something even beyond. Sometimes the Buddha ridicules the brahmins for claiming to teach the way to Brahma without having any personal experience of that - as he has in fact. And he says very confidently, "I know the world of the Brahma, and the way to the world of the Brahma. I know this from personal experience. You do not, even though you claim to be Brahmins, and you say that this is your religion - in fact you know less about it than I do, even though I do not follow that ideal" in the sense of regarding that ideal as the highest. And usually they acknowledge that, yes, he does know these things, you know: he knows more about their own religion, in a way, than they do themselves. Though, of course, because from the universal perspective you'll see the ethnic more clearly than the followers of the ethnic themselves see it. (pause)

Any further point about the sutta as a whole? [357] Why do you think it comes in this place? We've had five suttas so far, yes? Is there any sort of significance in the sequence?

First of all the going forth, the description of the Buddha's going forth and his encounter with Bimbisara before his Enlightenment. Then the account of his attainment of Enlightenment and victory over Mara. Then perfect speech. After that, a confrontation with ethnic religion in

the person of an elderly brahmin, and a complete overwhelming of the ethnic religion so that the elderly brahmin recognizes the higher nature of the Buddha's ideal of Enlightenment and links himself to that. Then, secondly, a meeting on the part of the Buddha with a young brahmin, who though recognizing the greatness of the Buddha continues to see him in his own terms and takes the help of the Buddha in practising his own religion as it were - takes the Buddha's advice as to how to reach the world of Brahma and takes refuge in him apparently as a Brahma-like figure rather than as the Buddha. So, does there seem to be any sort of sequence here - any significance in the sequence?

Chintamani: It reminds me of the Udana, when the first three sections after his Enlightenment are concerned with redefining the goal.

S: Yes. So here it's as though immediately after his Enlightenment he pointed out the importance of real communication; the Buddha is shown as in direct confrontation with the whole ethnic tradition - sometimes successfully overthrowing it, and sometimes as it were having to meet it half way, depending on the preparedness of the person to whom he was talking. So it will be interesting to see what comes next - next comes Sabhiya. So he's also, I mean, apparently a sramana and a brahmana. So that should be quite interesting. (pause)[358]

(6) Sabhiya

Thus have I heard: The Master was at one time staying near Rajagaha in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-ground. Now about that time a devi put certain questions to the mendicant Sabhiya, saying, "The recluse or brahman, Sabhiya, who explains these questions to thee, when asked, fare thou the godly faring near him." Now in days gone by the devi was a blood-relation of Sabhiya.

And when he had learnt these questions of the devi, the mendicant Sabhiya approached all the famous and renowned recluses and brahmans, course-setters with orders, flocks and followings, well-esteemed by many folk, that is to say: Purana-Kassapa, Makkhali-Gosala, Ajita-Kesakambali, Pakudha-Kaccayana, Sanjaya-Belatthiputta and the Jain, Nataputta. And he put these questions to them, and they, thus asked, did not succeed in solving them; and not succeeding, they showed anger, hate and ill-will. And in turn they asked Sabhiya questions.

Then thought he: "All these reverend men, famous and renowned,... have not succeeded in solving these questions of mine ... but question in return. What if I turn to low things and enjoy pleasures?"

Then again he thought: "There is still the recluse Gotama who is famous and renowned, a course-setter with an order, flock and followers, well-esteemed by many folk. What if I go and ask him?" And he thought: "These reverend recluses and brahmans ... are aged, venerable, old, ripe in years, ancient, time-honoured elders, gone forth long since, yet they do not solve my questions... I wonder whether the recluse Gotama will explain them? The recluse Gotama is both young in age and newly gone forth."

And again he thought: "A recluse is not to be disregarded, nor to be despised, because he is young. If he be young, he'll be of great power and might. What if I approach and ask the recluse Gotama these questions?"

And the mendicant Sabhiya set out to walk to Rajagaha; and in due course, as he wayfared, he came to Rajagaha, to the Squirrels' Feeding-ground in Bamboo Grove. And he approached the Master, greeted him and exchanged the usual compliments and sat down at one side. Thus seated, he spake these verses to the Master."[359]

S: All right, let's deal with the prose introduction first. What sort of situation does it set forth?

Andy: It's the situation of someone questing for Truth.

S: Yes. But there is this question of the questions. "Now about that time a devi put certain questions to the mendicant Sabhiya..." mendicant: paribbajaka,.. paribbajaka. We haven't had this term before. We've had pabbajja - which is going forth. But paribbajaka is one who wanders. Of course the implication is that he has gone forth and is then wandering. There's also the implication that he does not follow the brahminical tradition, that he is a sramana. So Sabhiya was a person of this type. He had gone forth. He was wandering. He was not following the Vedic tradition. He was a sramana. And, "a devi put certain questions to the mendicant Sabhiya." What do you think this devi represents? Incidentally, in the text it says devata, which is divinity; for some reason or other Woodward makes that devi, which is the feminine gender, which is not in accordance with the text. So, it's just a divinity, a deity. So what do you think is meant by the divinity putting certain questions to the mendicant wanderer Sabhiya?

Vimalamitra: Questions coming up in his own mind.

S: It's possibly questions coming up in his own mind. But why should the text not say "certain questions occurred to him"?

Vimalamitra: Maybe due to previous lives.

S: Maybe due to previous lives. It does say the devata was a blood relation of Sabhiya in a previous ... well, it doesn't say in a previous life, it says in days gone by. That could be understood as meaning [360] someone who was related to him in this life and who had died and who was now a devata and who remembered him. We get this sort of situation very commonly in the Pali texts. This is almost a stock phrase: in days gone by the devata was a blood relation of so-and-so.

Chintamani: A bit like a sort of muse.

S: A bit like a sort of muse. It's almost as though questions arise in his mind but from a deeper level. The devata signifies some sort of aspect of himself, some deeper level, which appeared or was experienced as almost another personality, like the poet's muse. In other words, the questions came from a quite profound level within himself - perhaps we could look at it in that way.

Devamitra: Can't we take it more literally than that though?

S: Yes, one can do. You know, it depends how literally one takes someone's conception of devata. If one takes it quite literally - well, yes, there are beings called devatas, and one of them could have been one's blood relation earlier on, is still interested in one, still concerned for one; and recommends one to ask his questions to sramanas and brahmanas and become the disciple of whoever gives a satisfactory answer. Yes, one can take it quite literally. One can even take it both ways. (pause)

But whichever way one takes it the suggestion is that the questions are not such as would ordinarily occur to Sabhiya, either literally or metaphorically. He has not thought of the questions himself, they do not come from the ordinary everyday Sabhiya. Perhaps he feels them as coming from somewhere else. The questions have been inspired, as it were; he's been prompted to ask them, whether by a divinity, or by some deeper level within himself. But certainly not by his ordinary everyday mind or consciousness.[361]

Devamitra: Interesting that the actual questions aren't actually set out, what in fact happened ...

S: They will be set out later on. (pause) This little episode also introduces the whole subject of having a question. One might say that there are questions and questions. There are questions one just asks with one's mind and there are questions which one asks, as it were, with one's whole being. And clearly Sabhiya's questions are more of the latter kind. Do you

see the distinction? (murmurs of assent)

Devamitra: It's like the question with one's whole mind is the koan.

S: Yes, right, very much so, yes. It has been pointed out - I forget by whom - that people very often ask questions apparently very much wanting an answer to those questions, especially if they're questions about the spiritual life - nirvana, meditation, you know - but you usually find, it's been pointed out, that if those people don't get an answer to their question (i.e. you ignore the question or just brush it aside) they just drop the matter. They don't come back to it. Or if, for instance, you just talk about something else they don't recur to that question usually. So what does that suggest?

Devamitra: In fact what you were sort of talking about yesterday about a certain insecurity.

S: No! No!

Phil: It's only superficial.

S: It's only superficial. If you really want an answer to your question you won't be put off. You'll ask again and again. But this in fact is very often what one finds happening: that people put their question, and if it isn't sort of answered they just drop the matter. They don't go on [362] asking. So if the question is a real question, you are in a sense desperate for an answer. You have to go on asking, you can't help it, even if it might seem a bit rude or even if it means being a bit insistent; but you go on asking your question because you really want to know, you really want to get an answer to that question. So that is the more as it were existential question. So presumably Sabhiya's questions were of this nature. They were questions which stayed with him. (pause)

So the devata says, "The recluse or brahman, Sabhiya, who explains these questions to thee, when asked, fare thou the godly faring near him", "tassa santike brahmacariyam cariyvasiti", in other words brahmacariya, the spiritual life. Lead the spiritual life in his presence, or if you like, under his auspices, under his patronage. Literally: near him. We've talked about brahmacariya as the spiritual life before. I don't think we've talked about santike: near him. What do you think is really meant by leading a spiritual life near somebody? This is a quite common word, or quite common phrase, this santike brahmacariyan.

Dick: Sort of leading a life as much like his as possible.

S: As much like his as possible. Yes, it certainly means that. It doesn't necessarily mean physical proximity. In fact the Buddha says, in one particular passage, "even though someone were to walk behind me step by step holding onto the edge of my robe but not following my teaching, he would be far from me and I would be far from him, but if someone followed my teaching then he would be near to me, and I would be near to him." But do you think it excludes physical proximity necessarily?

A Voice: No.

S: No. You think you can have both?

Chintamani: Quite often one reinforces the other.

S: Yes, quite often one reinforces the other. And perhaps at the beginning one needs that physical proximity. It's very difficult to go it [363] alone at the beginning, literally. (pause)

So a great deal seems to depend upon the answering of these questions. Do you think this is a sort of valid approach? Is there any sort of test, in a way, if somebody can answer your questions, then you will lead the spiritual life near him or under his guidance?

Ratnapani: It depends on the questions.

S: Depends on the questions, depends also upon the spirit in which they are asked, depends how much the questions mean to you. Do you think this is everybody's approach, or would be everybody's approach?

Devamitra: No.

S: No. What other approaches might there be for instance?

Devamitra: Well, I mean, this sounds a bit like a sort of wisdom approach in a way ...

S: It sounds very much like the wisdom approach.

Devamitra: ... rather than the approach of the devotee.

S: Yes. You also notice that in the previous two suttas there has been no sort of definite seeking out of the Buddha. The meeting takes place by accident. But here the initiative is coming very much from Sabhiya. He is going around looking for somebody. In fact he's visiting all the great and famous teachers of his time, ending up with the Buddha, who is the most recent of them, the youngest. So here is someone who is consciously looking for a teacher, looking for a guide, but looking for someone who can solve his questions. And he will take as his teacher, as his guide, the one who is able to solve his questions. I mean, some people have no questions at all. (pause)[364]

Devamitra: The fact that Sabhiya says that Gotama's still young also sort of reinforces the first feeling we have from the first two suttas that the Buddha may have gone forth at a much earlier age than twenty-nine.

S: Yes, because presumably he is by this time Enlightened, because he is spoken of as "famous and renowned", "a course-setter with an order, flock and followers, well-esteemed by many folk". But he's also spoken of as "young in age and newly gone forth". There is also the suggestion that we have here a very early teaching - that is, if the record is trustworthy, as it seems to be, that we have in this particular sutta a record of teachings given by the Buddha quite early on in his career. In other words, we have here really archaic Buddhism, archaic Dharma.

Vimalamitra: Would this be earlier than the Udana?

S: That's very difficult to say. It's very difficult to compare. But they seem to be roughly of the same archaic period. And don't forget even in the case of the Udana, even in the Udana, the gatha, or the verse, seems to be older than the prose portion, in most cases.

Phil: What period was the text written down?

S: Not written down until the first century BC in Ceylon, which is about 500 years later. One also finds from this sutta that there were a number of teachers in India - that is, especially northern India - in the Buddha's time. This list of six occurs repeatedly in the Pali texts. Nowadays they are hardly known. Only one of them is known at all, that is the last one: the Jain Nataputta, the founder of, or reviver at least, of what is now called the Jain religion, which has two or three million followers in India but hardly any outside. Let's see how these are described: "And when he had learned these questions of the devi, the mendicant Sabhiya approached all the famous and renowned recluses and brahmanas", both sramanas and brahmanas, both the non-Vedic and the Vedic teachers.[365]

Devamitra: And recluses is a translation of sramanas, is it?

S: Yes.

Phil: It's interesting that they show anger, hate, and ill will.

S: Yes.

Phil: ... after not being able to answer.

S: Well, this is as it were psychological in character, isn't it? Sometimes if people can't answer questions they get a bit upset. Why do you think this is?

Vimalamitra: Because it shows up their own fallibleness.

S: Their own ...?

Vimalamitra: Fallible?

S: Yes, but why should they even mind that? Do you think it is just that? Or ...

Vimalamitra: Because it wrecks their security.

S: Wrecks their security ...

Vimalamitra: Their whole teaching gone (indistinct words).

S: Um.

Chintamani: It breaks down the image that they had of themselves.

S: Breaks down the image that they had of themselves, yes.

Devamitra: Well, it suggests that they're not... they're not any higher developed than the person actually setting the questions.

S: Yes, at least to some extent. You find that very much with Socrates and his questioners, or interlocutors, in Plato's Dialogues. I mean, at [366] the beginning of the Dialogues Socrates represents himself as a humble enquirer, someone who just wants to find out the truth from this learned or famous person; and the learned or famous person often says, "Fire away, Socrates. Ask your questions. I'll answer them. You've come to the right man." And Socrates, very sort of humbly and tentatively, with many apologies, puts forward his rather simple-minded questions - as they appear - and the person that he's speaking to answers them very confidently. Then he puts another question; that is also answered quite confidently. And it goes so far comparatively smoothly. But then Socrates says, "Well, you said such and such things in reply to such and such a question, but such and such things in reply to another question, they don't seem consistent. Please explain that. I'm very stupid and ignorant, I'm sure I must have misunderstood you ... et cetera, et cetera." In that way he leads this person, using his questions, into deeper and deeper waters until they might get very confused and sometimes upset and angry. And in the end it is clear that, I mean, they don't really know all that they purport to know. And Socrates isn't as stupid as he looks or as he seems. And Socrates eventually comes to the conclusion that actually he's the wisest of men, as the Delphic Oracle has said, and he says, "I can't disbelieve the Oracle, but I'm the wisest of men ... of men in the sense that I know that I do not know, but others think that they know what they do not. But I am the wisest in the sense that I do know that I don't know. I acknowledge my own ignorance. I am aware of my own ignorance. They are not aware of their own ignorance."

So these are said to be "famous and renowned", "course-setters with orders". Let's have a look at the terms. It's samghino ganino ganacariya nata yasassino titthakara. But "samghino": samgha of course is the same as the Buddhist word at least: sangha. So they are samghino: they possess sanghas. As I mentioned some days ago there were among the wanderers - both

sramanas and brahmanas - those who had their followings among wanderers. So they formed a little sort of group and the term sangha was applied to this. Also sometimes [367] they were ganha, as a title. Ganha means almost like a sort of array, a little host, a little array. So all of these people, all of these teachers, had followings. They had their own sanghas and ganhas. So I mean we mustn't think these terms are exclusively Buddhist, though it may be now, but in the Buddha's day these were general terms used by everybody to which the Buddha gradually gave his own distinctive meaning in this case. So these sramanas and brahmanas, these recluses and brahmanas who were teachers, they had their sanghas, their orders, their ganhas, their hosts as it were. They were ganhacarya. They were - Hare says here - ganhacarya. Acarya is a teacher, so they were teachers of hosts - hosts in the sense of ganha or sangha. "Yasassino titthakara." Titthakara is translated as course-setters. It's not really quite like that. A tittha is a crossing-place, a ford. You get the idea? In some places the river is shallower than others, so there you can cross - maybe oxen can cross with their carts - so it's called a ford or a tirtha. So "titthakara" is one who makes a ford, and this is a very common term in the Pali texts for the non-Buddhist teachers. They're called ford-makers, or as it's translated here, course-setters. Though it isn't course-setters, it's ford-makers. So why do you think this sort of term should be applied to them?

Chintamani: Presumably in a ... (couple of words unclear) society, at a time like that, a ford-maker would be a very important person; and a real leader like that would be anybody who purported to show a way between the shores of birth and death.

S: Yes. It's based on the analogy of the ocean, or the river of birth and death. They profess to show a way across the river of birth and death to the opposite shore. They profess to show a way to release, to freedom. They profess to make a ford to the other shore. But from a Buddhist point of view they just do not succeed, they only profess to do this. But the term tirthakara comes to be applied to them. The "ford-makers", inverted commas, you could say. Just as in the case of Socrates the Sophists were the "wise men", inverted commas. The wise men were not actually wise, [368] and the ford-makers really did not make a ford. One often gets this situation depicted in the Pali texts of someone, some seeker - sometimes with questions, sometimes not with questions - goes to all these teachers one by one, but doesn't get either a satisfactory answer to his questions, or a satisfactory teaching, or is disillusioned in some way or other, and finally comes to the Buddha. So this is what happens in this instance. And not only that, but when they don't succeed in solving his questions, they show anger, hate, ill will. And, in turn, they ask Sabhiya questions. What do you think that signifies?

Ratnapani: They resented him for catching them out, and thought they'd get their own back, or ...

Aloka: Maybe it's also that the questions he asked were sort of ... quite sort of subtle and he might know a bit more than they did.

S: Possibly that, but I think that's doubtful. I think they are just trying to take him down a peg or two - to show that, well, if you can't answer questions that doesn't mean anything. I mean, anybody can put questions that somebody else can't answer - which is of course true. (pause)

"Then thought he: "All these reverend men, famous and renowned ... (et cetera) ... have not succeeded in solving these questions of mine ... (et cetera) ... but question in return. What if I turn to low things and enjoy pleasures?""

What are these "low things" and "enjoying pleasures"? I mean does that? "What if I turn to low things and enjoy pleasures?" What does that signify?

Voice: Disillusionment.

S: What sort of disillusionment? (pause) He thinks he's not ever going to get an answer to his questions. And since he has made the living of the spiritual life dependent upon finding a

solution to these questions, it seems as though he's not able to lead [369] the spiritual life. So what is the only alternative left to him? To go back to the world, to give up being a wanderer, to go back home, which is really disgraceful. To go back home, turn to low things - I mean, it's implicated the things of the world - and enjoy pleasures, eat, drink, and be merry. If I can't get an answer to my questions, if I can't find somebody to answer them, someone with whom I can then lead the spiritual life, I'd better go back to the worldly life. This is what he thinks. It's more like despair than disillusionment.

Devamitra: But it sort of feels as if it's a genuine situation for him. It's not a sort of rationalization, I think ...

S: Yes, I'm taking it at its face value. He really does feel that he really does mean this. But, I mean, it is quite clearly an existential issue as it were to get an answer to these questions. At least that is what he feels. I mean there are no doubt some people of this kind. Sort of everything sort of hangs upon certain questions being answered. I mean, what answering means maybe we'll have to see in a minute. There's answering and answering.

Devamitra: It's like maybe you go to somebody in search of something and you feel ... you might put certain questions to them and they might in a way even give you the right answers, but you sort of feel there's something not completely right about it, they're not completely sincere. Or they might be sincere but obviously there's a sort of blind spot, which you can't quite put your finger on, but you just feel it, sense it. And until you come across somebody who can sort of give you an answer, which you can sort of ...

S: So this raises what is a question and what is an answer. Because you may put your question to someone and he may apparently reply in an irrelevant fashion, but you may be completely satisfied and say that your question is answered. So in looking at it in that sort [370] of way, what does one mean by asking a question and what does one mean by getting an answer? I mean, when you are really asking a question, as Sabhiya apparently was, what is happening? Are you just asking a question?

Ratnapani: You're on the point (word indistinct)... I would have thought, and need to be as it were tipped over.

S: It seems very much like that. But why should it take that particular form - the question? Is there any particular reason for that?

Chintamani: It's as if you've exhausted all you ... everything you know and feel about life in general, there's just a big question mark left, what to do next?

S: Especially perhaps if you are of an intellectual nature, your situation naturally resolves itself into an intellectual form, i.e. into a question. Someone else might think in terms of seeking true happiness, or a refuge. I mean, refuge is implied when you get an answer to your question. But one can see that it really is a matter of life and death for Sabhiya because if he can't get an answer to his questions he can't lead the spiritual life. He can't even go on being a wanderer. He has to go right back. Do you think this justified or pretty extreme? I mean, what are the implications of his attitude?

Ratnapani: He's got no faith, I would have thought. He'd had nothing to have faith in yet, I suppose.

S: At least, well, he's got a certain amount of faith - he thinks that one or another of these recluses or brahmins will be able to answer his question - presumably he's got that sort of faith.

Ratnapani: He's got faith that he could have faith.[371]

S: Faith that he could have faith, yes. But one of his assumptions seems to be that he has to

find somebody to answer the questions for him. One of the assumptions seems to be he needs a teacher. So if he can't find a teacher he might as well give up. Teacher meaning for him someone who can answer these questions. If he can't find a teacher there's no point in carrying on. He can't get any further by his own efforts. And being an intellectual person he puts it in the form of, "if I can't get an answer to these questions of mine, I've gone as far as I can go by my own efforts." After all, he has gone forth, he's become a wanderer, he's made the round of all these teachers, and he can't get a satisfactory solution to his questions. In other words he's not in a position of being able to lead a spiritual life in the presence of a teacher or near a teacher. He's gone as far as he possibly can by his own efforts and it seems he can't get any further. So what is he to do? Why doesn't he stay where he is, do you think, and just hope? It is as though the spiritual life, if he can't get a teacher and go further, seems to him to be completely pointless, doesn't it?

Voice: Well it is anyway, if you can't go any further.

S: If you can't go any further, but why not just stay where you are and just hope that something or someone will turn up. Can't you do that?

Voice: He's got a lot of energy.

Voice: It's this thing of ... that he's been on the brink.

S: Maybe he can't stay on the brink; it's so painful, so precarious, as it were, just waiting in that sort of situation: not being able to get an answer to your questions, not being able to commit yourself when you want to commit yourself. It's a quite unbearable situation. Not being able to go forward when you want to go forward. Well, almost seems like disgust and despair, you just let yourself slide right back. I mean, sometimes [372] you get that reaction in people of a certain temperament. "I can't go forward, all right, I might as well wallow in it, never mind." That is the reaction isn't it? "If circumstances don't allow me to lead a spiritual life and make the progress I really want to make, OK, I'll just lead a completely worldly life." So it suggests that he's a bit of an extremist in a way, it's sort of all or nothing. Otherwise it means, some people might say, "well never mind, I've left home, I've gone forth, I'm a wanderer, well let's jog on a little bit further, maybe some other teacher will just turn up, maybe I'll find the answer somehow, maybe I'll just think of the answer myself." But he doesn't seem to consider these possibilities. "Either I get that answer now from a teacher with whom I can lead the spiritual life and make further progress or else I will go back." That seems to be his attitude, all or nothing virtually.

Voice: But it doesn't actually come to that does it, because he does go?

S: No, it doesn't, but he's prepared for that. That's what he thinks, that's his initial thought. Then again he thought: "There is still the recluse Gotama." Funny he comes last on the list. "There is still the recluse Gotama who is famous and renowned, a course-setter with an order, flock and followers, well-esteemed by many folk. What if I go and ask him?" And he thought, "these reverend and esteemed brahmans are aged, venerable, old, ripe in years, ancient, time-honoured elders, gone forth long since, yet they do not solve my questions. I wonder whether the recluse Gotama will explain them. The recluse Gotama is both young in age and newly gone forth."

So what does one see here?

Voice: He seems to think wisdom comes with age.

S: Seems to think wisdom comes with age, yes. And what sort of outlook is that characteristic of, that wisdom comes with age? That the old are the ones who know?

Voice: Established ethnic.

S: Established ethnic, which was true within that context, yes. It was the old men who knew, in the sense of the history of the [373] tribe, the traditions, what had happened long ago. Yes, the old men are the repositories of knowledge, even wisdom in the worldly sense. But this is quite inapplicable when it comes to spiritual things. So again what does this sort of way of looking at things of his suggest?

Voice: Well it's a very conditioned idea. It seems as if the whole culture was a kind of entrapment of ethnic Buddhism.

Voice: It's almost as if he's sort of been wandering around in the ethnic for so many years that he's beginning to see the...

S: Yes, right. I means he's thinking that [it's] the old, long-established teachers who are more likely to have the answers because they are old and long established. But now of course he is beginning to doubt that, as we'll see in a minute. But this is a very common human tendency. If someone is old or more experienced et cetera, et cetera, they are more likely to be wise. Well maybe they are within certain limits, but not ultimately.

Voice: Especially if they've got a long white beard!

S: Yes, right.

Voice: It's almost as if he's exhausted all the ethnic teachers of the day, which makes him really very ready for the Buddha.

S: Though momentarily somewhat in despair. It's like sometimes people tell you about the Catholic Church which has been going on for 2,000 years. It's as strong as ever if not stronger: it must have the truth. Well this is one of the arguments put forward on behalf of the Catholic Church. It couldn't have lasted as long as that without there being something in it. So you get the sort of mental picture of this ancient venerable mother church, very, very wise, very experienced, knowing everything. You've only got just to go and take refuge in her. She'll look after you, tell you what's what, and tell you what to do. This is the sort of mental picture that is conjured up.[374]

Voice: Or for that matter lust, delusion, and hatred have been going on.

S: Yes indeed. Sometimes people think of the Church of England in the same sort of way. The dear old Church of England, going on century after century, so venerable, all those lovely buildings, all those lovely churches, all those beautiful stained-glass windows, it's all so old. Yes? There must be something in it. Well yes, certainly there must be, but not necessarily on that purely spiritual level which has got nothing to do with time and ancientness.

Voice: If one indoctrinates. I mean I associate,... if I confuse the spiritual and the religious I probably can associate the spiritual with gothic. As it is now I associate religion with gothic.

S: It's true that someone who has been sincerely practising for a long time, he is more likely to be wise and to have insight than someone who's been sincerely practising for a short while, other factors being equal, as they say. But it is not only a matter of age and length of time that you've been practising and experience and so on. Some people are very gifted; you know, they may cover in a few weeks or months the ground that it has taken you years upon years to cover. So don't be over-impressed by age, or antiquity, or by position of course. You see someone occupying a long-standing position, you're told he's the 300th pope or whatever it is. Always there's this great long line of them going back and back. Or the 101st Archbishop of Canterbury. So there's this whole line going right back to the time before the Norman Conquest. A long series of venerable figures with long white beards and golden coats and holding crosiers and looking very fatherly or grandfatherly. And all this is meant to play upon your ethnic sensibilities, because obviously we have these ethnic sensibilities. We've lived in this way, the human race that is, for hundreds of thousands of years. Looking up to the elders

of the tribe. It is the natural respect that you feel for the elders of the tribe, which is a very healthy thing when it comes to the worldly matters, but it's quite irrelevant when it comes to spiritual things. The elders of the tribe may be completely astray. From a spiritual point of view their wisdom may be completely useless. I mean some even of their worldly wisdom is pretty [375] useless not to speak of their spiritual knowledge. The elders of the tribe can lead you astray even in worldly things. But the fact that they are the elders of the tribe doesn't give them any standing as spiritual teachers.

Voice: And likewise with Buddhist teachers, come to that. They've got titles and robes and are assumed to be half enlightened at least.

S: Exactly right. Remember that they've been in it twenty, thirty, forty years, they've got this title and that title, this certificate and that certificate. They've passed so many examinations, they know Pali backwards, et cetera. Or that they were discovered in some remote part of Tibet, they're incarnate lamas, they've received hundreds of initiations, so they get this sort of build up and one is expected to be impressed. But it is really appealing to the same sort of thing.

Voice: It is significant that in Blake, all of his, sort of alive, wisdom figures are mostly young. I mean his older ones like Urizen represent this old impressive father figure.

S: Well it's much the same in Mahayana iconography where the Bodhisattvas are represented as young men, while even the Buddhas are represented in the prime of life. You don't get this "wise old man" in Buddhism. Brahma Sahampati, who requested the Buddha to preach the Dhamma, he's one of the brahmas within the wheel of life, he's represented as an old man with a white beard, but it is significant that he is not Enlightened and he has to beg for teaching. So you don't in Buddhism get this association of spiritual wisdom with old age. You get the association, if there is any association age-wise, of spiritual wisdom with youth and maturity.

Voice: At the same time.

S: At the same time because the youth and maturity are in a way symbolical because wisdom has the freshness of youth and the balance and harmony of maturity.

Voice: It more leads towards balance and the prime of life is the kind of middle of it.[376]

S: So maybe Sabhiya was thinking that these teachers, these other teachers, just because they were old and distinguished and had been around a long time, they must know the answers. But in the end he found that it wasn't so. Then he had to think about this new young teacher who'd appeared. And then how does he reflect?

And again he thought, "A recluse is not to be disregarded, nor to be despised, because he is young. If he be young, he'll be of great power and might."

That's interesting. "If he be young he'll be of great power and might." What do you think he means by that? Let's see what the Pali is. It's "daharo", tender, delicate, "mahiddhiko mahanubhavo". "If he be young he'll be of great power": maha-iddhi. Iddhi is a word we haven't talked about yet and it is a quite interesting word. And mahanubhavo. Let's just go into the meaning of these words and then discuss why Sabhiya thinks that way.

Iddhi is sort of power or potency. A king for instance is said to have iddhi. The power or potency that naturally belongs to the king. You get the idea? And then there is a sort of natural extension of this. It comes to mean a sort of magical potency, and the iddhis are the supernormal powers. But the idea is of a sort of natural potency, a natural power, or a potency, or a power that naturally attaches itself to a very powerful personality, even to the extent of them being able to work, as it were, miracles. There's a suggestion of miraculous power, though the miraculous is of course also the natural. Do you get the meaning? So there

is a sort of continuity of meaning from the iddhi of someone like the king to the iddhi of the yogi. This in a way connects up with the dhyanas; it is said that the fourth dhyana is the basis for the development of the iddhi, in the sense of supernormal powers or magical powers. So why do you think that is?

Voice: Presumably it's some vast energies.

S: Yes. Do you remember what these four dhyanas are? More recently I've started talking of them in English terms. I started doing this when I was in New Zealand in one of the lectures there, but I speak now in terms of the state or stages of first of all integration, then inspiration, then permeation, the radiation: integration, inspiration, permeation, and radiation. Now why is this? Why these particular terms? I think one ought to go into it just a little but then we can come back [377] to iddhi and perhaps understand it better. You remember the image or simile for the first dhyana. Do you remember what that was?

Voice: Soap and water.

S: It's not just soap and water, but what happens to the soap and water, what do you do with the soap and water?

Voice: They both join together.

S: Yes, but it isn't just soap is it? It's a particular kind of soap.

Voice: It's soap powder.

S: It's soap powder. So in this simile, in this image, the Buddha says the first dhyana is like somebody taking a quantity of soap powder and mixing it together with water so that a sort of ball is produced and, in this ball, every single drop of the dry soap powder is saturated with water and all the water is fully absorbed into that ball of soap and water so that no drop of water is left over. So what does this suggest?

Voice: Integration.

S: Integration, but what is being integrated?

Voice: The emotions.

S: The emotions, energies, conscious and unconscious. According to the more analytical accounts the first dhyana consists of five, what are called dhyangas, five dhyana factors. Are you familiar with this? This is quite a basic teaching. First of all there is ekaggata, which is usually translated as concentration: that means one-pointedness. Sometimes it is cittasakaggata, which means one-pointedness of the mind or heart or consciousness. So this is, as it were, the spearhead of the whole process of integration. So there's one-pointedness, which is not just the one-pointedness of the conscious mind but the integration of the whole psychic contents, one could say. Then there is sukha [378], which is happiness; piti which is, one can say, rapture; then vitakka which is, how can we render that, thinking of an object; and then vicara which is thinking about an object.

Voice: What was the first one again?

S: Mental one-pointedness.

Voice: What was the Pali for that?

S: I said ekaggata or cittassekaggata. For instance, if you even look at this word ekaga it's not even one-pointedness. Aga is more like a peak or a pinnacle. Suppose you think of the gable of a house. I mean this is a comparison which is often used. What is it that is characteristic of

the gable of a house?

Voice: It supports the rest of it.

S: No, I wasn't thinking of that, but the two sides of the roof slope up to a point, they converge on this point, which is at a higher level. So when you speak of the mind being ekagga, it is not just with one point, it is with one peak, with a common peak not only towards which, but up towards which, everything converges. This is what we translate as concentration. But concentration doesn't give the real meaning does it? Because you could be concentrated here, concentrated there, but here the suggestion is that all your energies are not only flowing together but flowing up towards a peak or pinnacle of convergence. So as your energies are integrated in this way, as your interest centres in this way at higher and higher levels, you naturally feel very happy because there's an absence of conflict, and because of this absence of conflict especially between say, your conscious and unconscious interests, to use these expressions, the energy which was in the unconscious is now sort of flowing though into the conscious, up into the conscious. Hence you get that sensation of priti or rapture. And at the same time there is mental activity, especially with regard to the object of your practice. It might be, say, the breathing process. You think of it and you think about it, in other words vitaka, vicara. So we can see from this analytical account of the first [379] dhyana that it is very much a process of coming together of energies with the result of happiness and rapture, though with a certain amount of mental activity, especially with regard to the object of concentration still. So the soap and the soap powder is quite an apt illustration of this. It represents a coming together, it represents a blending, a harmonization, an integration. So therefore I call the first dhyana the stage of integration.

I sometimes speak also - and I've spoken in this way in that New Zealand lecture on meditation - I sometimes speak also of horizontal integration and vertical integration. Horizontal integration means more like the integration of, say, emotions and reason on the conscious level, that's the horizontal integration. The vertical integration is the integration of conscious with unconscious. I mean unconscious being thought of as the subconscious, metaphorically what is below the conscious mind. So when you integrate those - when these two, which are as it were vertically structured, come together - then you have a vertical integration. So a full or complete integration is both horizontal and vertical. So this is the first dhyana, the level of integration. And obviously this is very, very important. And do you see the connection between happiness or bliss and the integration of one's energies? When you feel unhappy you are divided, but when all of your energies are flowing together in the same direction you feel happy, and quite naturally. So a state of concentration or state of integration is also a state of happiness, it couldn't be anything else. So this is the first dhyana, which I call the state of integration.

Voice: Can one then say happiness is integration?

S: One could say really happiness is integration, integration is happiness. Happiness is integration because integration is happiness. To be integrated is to be happy. To be happy is to have been integrated. All right, what about the simile or the image or the illustration for the second dhyana? Do you remember what that is?

Voice: Bubbles coming up into a lake from an underground stream.

S: Yes. So what is the point of this illustration?[380]

Voice: The unconscious is welling up into the conscious mind.

S: Perhaps it is more than just the unconscious, unless you use the word unconscious in a very broad sense indeed. Because in a sense at least up to a point the unconscious has already been integrated with the conscious. But it is as though something is welling up from an even deeper level, almost from a sort of spiritual level. From very, very deep down, certainly from some other dimension, something is coming up. Or, we mustn't be misled by words or by

figures of speech, it can be experienced as coming from above. You know, sometimes we speak of the depths, and sometimes we speak of the heights, but from some other direction presumably you could even imagine it or feel it coming in sideways. (laughter) Yes, you can imagine something coming in from some other direction obliquely. It sort of slides or slips and you don't really know which direction it comes from, you just find it there and it hasn't come from anywhere that you are conscious of. It just appeared, out of the blue, mysteriously, so you could speak of it coming obliquely. But very often, yes, you do have the experience of something bubbling up from the depths, something which is quite different from your whole, even integrated state of mind, which comes from somewhere else. Or you experience it as coming from above, like a ray of light coming down from the heavens.

Voice: Transcendental?

S: It's not transcendental at this stage, but that's not impossible, it could be. But within the context of the four dhyanas as such, no. But that isn't ruled out, but then it's in a way more than a dhyana then. So you get the impression, say, of inspiration, and I think this is also the stage of very pure and authentic artistic inspiration as well. When inspirations come into the mind, I mean, sometimes it's little feeble flashes or just the odd bubble, you know, bubbling up, but sometimes it is very, very powerful indeed in a quite overwhelming sort of way. But within the dhyanic context the experience wouldn't be quite overwhelming because the inspiration would come up within the already integrated mind. So do you get the picture? This is the stage of inspiration, for want of a better term, inspiration of course literally means breathing [381] into, or blowing into.

Voice: This ties up with what you said at the ordination about the monastic ordination, a process of purification so that the (?) makes itself ready for the transcendental.

S: Yes. So the stage of inspiration and then the stage of permeation. What is the illustration here?

Voice: Doesn't it have a lotus flower above the water?

S: In a way above the water, but the point of the illustration is that the lotus flowers are soaked in the water, permeated by the water, thoroughly immersed in the water. They've got drops of water all over them, they're growing in the water and also sprinkled with water, in other words they are permeated by water. So what does this suggest in terms of one's dhyana experience?

Voice: One's whole being is permeated by the spiritual influences.

S: Yes. First of all you've got, as it were, this inspiration welling up, but this eventually fills the whole area and you're completely immersed in it and soaked in it and you feel as though you're living in some new, some sort of different element. In whatsoever direction you move you are still in that and that is still in you. It is in you and you are in it. I mean this is the characteristic feature of the experience, one could say. It would be rather like, supposing you were swimming in the water, you not only had the water outside you but that the water was permeating all the way through you too. It would be like that. Of course, if that happened you'd drown (laughter) but supposing your whole being was permeated by the water so that not only were you in the water but the water was in you. You get the idea? This is what the third dhyana is like. This becomes more and more difficult to understand, obviously.

Voice: So you are, as it were, soaked in inspiration?

S: Soaked in inspiration yes. And surrounded by inspiration. But, I mean, again you've reached a higher level of inspiration [382] even in that way. It goes beyond even that. That is more like the transitional stage from the one to the other. So you don't feel any limitations, you feel as though you can expand and flow in any direction, because you're in that and that is in you. I mean, this is a state which some mystics seem to experience and in which they feel

that they're one with God, though from the Buddhist point of view this is simply the experience of the third dhyana. But you can understand how people could interpret this experience in that sort of way, because it is very, very vivid, a very powerful experience, and very real and certainly a completely authentic experience. It is an experience, but one can nevertheless misinterpret it and overvalue it.

Voice: Actually it seems to suggest a certain dissolution of the subject-object polarity.

S: In a way, in a way. A certain, I would say, transparency of them, not dissolution of them. They become more transparent, less opaque, but not dissolved.

Voice: I just wondered if that wasn't also... say Christian mystics, I don't know if they have any idea of the subject-object distinction being dissolved but maybe they could mistake it for that.

S: Because according to the orthodox Christian teaching you are never dissolved completely in God, you never become one with God really. But you can feel oneness with God without actually becoming God. So this is very much like this state. The duality of subject and object is not dissolved but it is certainly rendered transparent and less opaque. So the mystic will feel like, "well I am here and God is also here and I am somehow one with God." In other words we are very, very close, like two people might feel that they are one, but they know quite well at the same time that they are not one, they remain here, irreducibly two, but for the moment they might feel one without actually being one in any sense. So this is the stage of permeation. Well what about the stage of radiation? What is the illustration for this?

Voice: A man after a bath wrapped in a sheet?[383]

S: Yes, so what does this suggest?

Voice: Complete insulation.

S: Complete insulation, yes, but I didn't call this the stage of insulation, I call it the stage of radiation. So why is that?

Voice: White is a radiating colour.

S: Yes there's that too.

Voice: When you're full of inspiration you can't but give out it.

S: It's as though the dhyana state has become so strong that it begins to affect your environment. You, as it were, are stronger than it, you begin to have an effect on your environment, you begin to create an atmosphere. I mean, as you know, if you use a certain room for meditation, use it as a shrine room, an atmosphere builds up which other people can perceive, even people who don't meditate, when they come in.

Voice: Do you think you can become impervious to that yourself, in a way?

S: What do you mean?

Voice: Well, for instance, at the room I was meditating in (?) Road, before I moved into that room apparently there was supposed to be a rather odd feeling in the room of which I was completely oblivious. I just used to meditate there and then Annabel, Mike's wife, came back and she went into the room one day and said, "Oh, the feeling's gone." I mean if there had been any change of feeling in the room, I was completely impervious to it.

S: But, of course, in any case one isn't in a sense conscious of one's own feeling, because it's just you. You have it all the time, you're not conscious in a way of the atmosphere you

yourself create because you carry it with you all the time. And also if you are in a very positive mood, you won't notice sort of negative influences; they won't affect you. Or if you notice them it'd just be by way of awareness, not one of actually picking them [384] up and actually feeling them, unless you're just sensitive without reacting yourself.

Voice: A friend of mine came into the shrine room at Sukhavati, and he'd never done any meditating or had no interest in Buddhism really at all. A couple of weeks later I met him in Crawley and he was describing the shrine room to another friend and he described it as having blue walls and being really good.

Voice: You mean physically very good?

Voice: He described the walls as being blue! [when they were not, tr.] You know this incredible atmosphere that ...

S: Well he was describing what he felt about the room in terms of what he saw, or had thought that he had seen. It was as though the walls were blue, that was the effect produced on him.

So in this state of, when you are insulated, it means you can't be affected by your surroundings. Your dhyana state can't be dispersed by your surroundings. Not only that but your dhyana state can affect your surroundings, hence radiation. So it's the stage of radiation. So you've built up a very positive, very powerful concentration - in fact a very positive powerful mental state or psychic state, or spiritual state - so much so that you can start working changes in your environment. You can even start affecting other people's thoughts, other people's minds. Other people pick up things from you, even at a distance, even without seeing you. And here you begin to get the so-called supernormal faculties coming into operation. Do you see the connection now? So in this way, for this reason, it is said that the fourth dhyana, the stage of radiation, is the basis for the development of the iddhis. These supernormal powers or faculties.

Voice: Is it anything to do with siddhi?

S: Yes it's the same word actually, iddhi and siddhi.

Voice: I can't see the connection with a man wrapped in a sheet and radiation.[385]

S: Well if you are powerful enough to be insulated, you will radiate. You can say it's like the electric bulb, it's insulated because it's, you know, the filament is inside the glass bulb, so it's insulated. At the same time it radiates. I mean, if you've built up so much energy that you can't be affected then a point will come where you'll turn the table: not only are you not affected, but you start affecting others with your positive and powerful vibes. (laughter) So the stage of radiation.

Voice: In fact it works back to front: if one can radiate metta it's sort of like a protective shield.

S: Yes, yes. In other words you could say radiation is the best insulation. I mean, forget about insulation, if you are radiating you don't need to be insulated.

Voice: To someone who thinks in terms of loft space and fibreglass it doesn't really tally at all.

Voice: It really knocks on the head this idea that I must avoid such and such a person who gives such bad vibes to me. The answer is to put out good vibes to them.

S: Yes, right. If you are in a position to do that. If you can't then it is best to avoid them.

Voice: Yes, until you can.

S: So you can see the sequence of stages now: integration, inspiration, permeation, and radiation. So when one meditates, in the sense of trying to develop the samatha side of one's spiritual experience, this is what one is trying to do. First of all you are trying to integrate all your energies and emotions. Then you are trying to open yourself to inspiration from higher or deeper or other levels. Then you are trying to get into a state in which you are completely pervaded by a higher element, as it were, live and move and have your being in it. And then you are trying to increase your psychic positivity to such an extent that it will just radiate in all directions and affect others, either through your words and actions, or even without words or actions, and provide you with a natural insulation against all, or at least [386] negative, psychic forces.