

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

Transcription of the 1974 Udana seminar

(Some days were not recorded, or the tapes are missing)

The Udana and Itivuttaka (Woodward's translation, 1935 edition)

Given early July 1974 at Millbrook in Cornwall, by Urgyen Sangharakshita

Present: Upasakas Buddhadasa, Jitari, Chintamani, Aryamitra and Upasikas Bodhishri, Malini, Dhammadinna

[1]

Day One

S: Both these texts are from the Theravada Pali canon. In the Ancient Indian Buddhist world there were various canons, various recensions of the scriptures, all based on oral tradition. There were at least four independent, complete collections: one of them in Pali, that of the Theravadins; one of them in Apabhramsa, that of the Pudgalavadins; one in Sanskrit, that of the Sarvastivadins; and one in Prakrit of the Mahasanghikas. There were all these four, but only one has survived complete in the original language. Of the others we've got fragments in the original (very small fragments mostly) and translations into Chinese and Tibetan - mostly Chinese. The Pali canon of the Theravadins, compiled originally in India, maybe 200 or 300 years after the death of the Buddha, is the only one that has come down intact and it wasn't even committed to writing until the first century CE, probably (in Ceylon, not even in India), so that as a literary document it belongs to the beginning of the Christian era. The Pali canon, like the other canons, is arranged in three great divisions - the Sutta, the Vinaya, and the Abhidhamma. The Sutta-Pitaka contains mainly discourses and sayings of the Buddha (and disciples, a few). In the Sutta-Pitaka you've got, first of all, the long discourses, the Digha-Nikaya - translated into English as Long Discourses of the Buddha (there are 32 of those).[2]

Then there is the Majjhima-Nikaya - the Middle Length Discourses, 152 of those. Then there is the Samyutta-Nikaya, which is a sort of collection of fragments, short sayings, verses, some of them already appearing (in either the same form or in another form) in the previous two nikayas, as they are called - the Digha and the Majjhima, and others quite original, and all arranged according to subject. So it's a sort of collection of anthologies. There are various sayings and teachings and verses on, say, the gods, on stream entry, on the Buddha, on virtue, on householders, on monks, on nuns, on trees, on the ocean etc. It's a sort of collection of anthologies. Then there's the Anguttara-Nikaya where the topics are all arranged numerically: the one of this, the two of that, the three of something else, right up to eleven. That in fact is how the Itivuttaka also is arranged, though that only goes up to four. After that, there is the Khuddaka-Nikaya, which is a vast miscellany of all sorts of things that they couldn't include in the earlier nikayas. Some are very old and some are quite late. Among the very early ones (or at least as far as we can see) probably the earliest is the Sutta Nipata, which is of course very famous. Next probably come the verses of the Udana, though not the prose part. Then possibly the Itivuttaka, the Dhammapada, and then other rather late works or composite works (partly late, partly early) like the Jataka stories (all 550 of them). And then there are a few works which are almost Abhidhamma - like the Patisambhidamagga and the

(?)Caryavamsa which deals with the Bodhisattva ideal. These are very late indeed; later even than some of the earlier Mahayana sutras. All this material is [3] included in the Khuddaka-Nikaya. You have Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, Anguttara and Khuddaka all making up the Sutta-Pitaka, or discourses and sayings of the Buddha in the Pali canon.

Then part two is the Vinaya, which is supposed to be monastic discipline, but it's almost anything except that. There's a lot of material about the life of the Buddha; all sorts of anecdotes, teachings, and here and there rules with the circumstances under which they were laid down: that's the Vinaya-Pitaka. The Vinaya-Pitaka is a very important source of knowledge about India in the day of the Buddha, as the Sutta-Pitaka also is. The Vinaya-Pitaka is also partly quite early and partly quite late material all mixed up together in five great divisions. Then the Abhidhamma-Pitaka is the latest of the collection, most sophisticated intellectually: it's very dry in a way - very analytical. It arranged all the material found in the suttas and the Vinaya in a purely abstract, personal, almost sort of mathematical way. There's no reference to anything concrete. There are seven books and, for instance, the first book is Dhammasangani which means enumeration of phenomena. It first of all enumerates all the different dhammas, all the different factors of existence, and then in the last book it enumerates all their possible combinations, and of course you've got quite a large number of dhammas of various kinds. Here, the Abhidhamma diverges, that is, the Theravada Abhidhamma diverges from the common tradition - you've got a Sarvastivadin Abhidhamma and various other Abhidhammas which are [4] rather different in content, but not in spirit. It's a very intellectual, analytical sort of approach, though not without its value. It's also very systematic. It arranges all the teaching systematically, but it's quite airy and only for the specialist.

So this is the Tipitaka, the three Pitakas, the three collections, the three baskets of the Theravadins in Pali, and the Udana and Itivuttaka come in that Khuddaka-Nikaya, the miscellaneous collection of the Sutta-Pitaka.

The Udana

S: The word Udana means the upward-going breath. According to general teaching, there are five different kinds of breath. For instance we've got the in- and out-going breath - the anapana, on which the Anapanasati or mindfulness of the in- and out-going breath is based. Another breath is the upward-going breath. Another is the downward-going breath, which is supposed to be responsible for the functions of excretion. In this way there are five different breaths (I can't recollect the other two). The upward-going breath is the breath which sort of comes up in a tremendous wave, when you feel very strongly and powerfully moved emotionally, when something is really stirred up and you breathe forth an utterance; an utterance sort of comes up and out under the tremendous stress of this feeling of [5] inspiration and almost like possession. So Udana means that. It means that breath, and it also means what is produced - the sort of utterance that is produced as a result of that breath, that inspiration. It's not just breath in the literal sense. The usage becomes a bit metaphorical. An Udana is therefore often translated as an inspired saying, or as Woodward says, a 'verse of uplift' (which is pretty weak, though what else can he do - he's done his best). An Udana is one particular category of literature. Quite early in the development of Buddhism, they classified all the literature, as it was coming to be (though even at the time of the oral tradition this was done to some extent), into different types, which cuts across the division into books and collections. For instance one type is Jataka (birth story); another is a brief

saying, another is a lengthy discourse, another is a parable. These are all types of literature, types of teaching; and one is the udana. So the udanas are those verses which the Buddha breathed out under tremendous force of inspiration, either in a certain situation with his disciples, or quite spontaneously on his own at some very important or critical stage of his spiritual career. These are all called udanas. The Udana is a collection of these verses. Many of the verses are obscure and very general and you can't quite see how they came to be produced. They are associated with various stories in prose. As far as we can see, the verses were associated with the prose at a rather later date some time after the Buddha's death. In a few cases the prose may reflect the actual circumstances in which the udanas originated, but in some cases we [6] can see quite clearly that an udana has been tacked on to a prose narrative with which it has very little to do. We shall see that for ourselves, anyone can see it. You can see it with half an eye, as it were. In some cases it's just mildly inappropriate or irrelevant. In other cases (there seem to be a few cases) there seems to be a bit of conflict between the content of the prose narrative portion and the content of the udana. As far as scholars have been able to make out, the verses of this udana book represent a very archaic stage of the tradition indeed. The language, for instance, is more archaic than the language of the prose part, even though the prose part itself is very archaic. The language of the verses of the Udana is very similar to that of the Sutta Nipata, or rather, to the more ancient parts of the Sutta Nipata, which are almost certainly the oldest part of the canon. With the verses of the Udana we get very near to the original sources of the teaching, very near to the Buddha's own words. It may well be that the Udana verses are the Buddha's own words, or based on them. The prose sections with which the verses are associated came not very far behind. Some of these, though they may be in prose rather than verse, very likely do go back to original teachings and traditions and situations and represent them quite faithfully.

In a way, we sometimes see two different levels of Buddhism in the verses and in the prose portions and this is rather quaint and rather interesting. They don't always quite fit. We can see that something has happened in the interval - there's been some kind of [7] development, not always for the better.

Aryamitra: Isn't an aphorism more or less the same as an udana?

S: Well an aphorism is generally said to be a short, pithy saying, very condensed and compact, whereas an udana is short and compact, but it does (which an aphorism doesn't necessarily) suggest that it is delivered under a very strong pressure of emotional inspiration. An aphorism is usually a dry comment on life, as it were; not anything very inspired; though it can be, but not necessarily, but an udana by very definition is a sort of inspired utterance. 'An inspired utterance' would be better than 'a verse of uplift'. The fact that it's in verse is sort of accidental perhaps.

Chintamani: Originally, would the prose sections as well as the verses, have been chanted by monks and committed to memory?

S: Yes, prose was chanted as well as verse. There's a different way of chanting, obviously, with prose, but it is a chant all the same; like the introduction to the Mangala Sutta.

Chapter 1: Enlightenment

Sutta 1.1

p.1: 'Thus have I heard...' All suttas begin with 'Thus have I heard' [8] and Mahayana sutras begin likewise. The 'I' is Ananda. It's supposed to be Ananda's marvellous memory at work, according to the Theravada tradition, and that after the Buddha's death they held that council at Rajagriha and Ananda, after being purified of various offences and after he'd gained Enlightenment also, recited whatever he recollected the Buddha having spoken by way of teaching. So traditionally, everything in the Pali canon is traced back to Ananda's recollection at that first council. This of course is questioned by scholars, but it's definitely the tradition. So, 'Thus have I heard': it's Ananda or whoever is the spokesman or mouthpiece of tradition saying, 'This is what has come down to me from the Buddha.' All suttas then go on to describe the occasion.

'Exalted One' translates Bhagavan, generally translated 'the Lord', though I've rendered it 'the richly-endowed one', because that is what it literally means: the one who possesses various important spiritual qualities, who is endowed with them, so it's not 'Lord' in the Christian Western sense, and 'Exalted One' is not bad, but it doesn't really convey the meaning of the original Bhagavan.

So, 'On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Uruvela' usually described as a small township or large village - 'on the bank of the river Neranjara' - which of course is in modern Bihar 'at the foot of the bodhi-tree, having just won the highest wisdom', in other words having just become Enlightened. I don't know how [9] literally we are meant to take that because it's as though (according to some accounts, some texts) that the various texts which are described as having taken place after the Enlightenment, are not so much after the Enlightenment as explorations of different aspects of the Enlightenment experience; a working of it out in detail, so in a way, a sort of completion of the Enlightenment experience. The Buddha here directs his attention to the pratitya samutpada as though, before he did that, even though he was Enlightened, he didn't know anything about pratitya samutpada which would not be according to orthodox teaching. I think probably we can say that the various episodes such as this, taking place, as it were, after the Buddha's Enlightenment, are more sort of after the decisive turning point and represent an exploration of different aspects of that Enlightenment. In other words they are not to be too rigidly separated from the Enlightenment experience itself. Not that the Buddha got Enlightenment and there he was Enlightened and then he started thinking about pratitya samutpada. That's a much too literalistic way of looking at it. He was exploring it, was expanding it, it was opening out, that whole vast experience sort of radiating in all directions, opening up in all directions, and one of them was this particular one. Not that the experience was a certain limited thing and then he started looking around and understanding various other things afterwards: you mustn't look at it like that.

'Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated for seven days in one posture and experienced the bliss of release. Then the Exalted One, after the lapse of those seven days, during the first watch of the night, rousing himself from that concentration of mind, gave close attention to causal uprising in direct order', that's [10] anuloma. Anuloma literally means 'according to the lie of the hair.' It's the natural direction of the hair, therefore 'in progressive order', 'in the usual order', not in reverse.

First of all comes the general abstract formula of conditionality: 'This being, that becomes; by the arising of this, that arises,' and then filling it in in detail.

'... This is the arising of the mass of Ill.' Now this is of course one of the most important and famous formulas in the whole range of traditional Buddhist teaching. It has been explained elsewhere. It's explained for instance in 'A Survey of Buddhism', beginning [in older editions] on page 103. There's an explanation of each of those twelve nidanas in turn. There is a detailed explanation of the meaning of each of these terms, and it's as well to know exactly what they mean, because if one took each translation literally, there might be some misunderstanding. For instance, mind and body, namarupa, doesn't really correspond with mind and body in the Western sense.

'The Exalted One was seated for seven days in one posture and experienced the bliss of release.' That seems quite a feat.

I don't know whether one is to take the seven days literally - I'm not sure of that. I wouldn't rule it out as literally possible, but I just wonder, because in earlier parts of the canon, in say the [11] Vinaya, there are early accounts of the first four weeks after the Enlightenment, how the Buddha spent them, but in later accounts those four become seven weeks. You've got seven times seven days; it's almost like the 49 days of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead'. So you just wonder whether you're concerned with ordinary chronological time at all, or whether it's just a sort of period that is being indicated. Maybe one isn't concerned with ordinary time at all. Maybe what is happening is happening in some other dimension with some other time, as it were. It's difficult to say, but at the same time, the Buddha might have sat quite literally for seven days, maybe just sort of easing his posture occasionally. It isn't impossible, I think. Even in the history of Western mysticism you hear of saints in quite historical times who remained immobile in prayer day and night, and these are quite well authenticated. One can be very intensely absorbed and concentrated and be quite oblivious to what is happening outside for quite long periods. After all, you can sleep for ten hours, so why can't you remain in samadhi for ten hours? It doesn't seem all that extraordinary from a purely biological point of view. From a biological point of view, samadhi is practically the same as sleep, only deeper; so I wouldn't rule it out. At the same time, I wouldn't be prepared to insist on it, that he literally sat there for seven days by the clock, as it were, but he might have done. I don't feel the need to be very dogmatic about it so as to be very certain even, one way or the other. But what one can be sure of is that there was a tremendous sort of inner absorption for a very long period of time. Because, after all, the Buddha had gained Enlightenment [12] which he had been looking for for so many years, and at last he was there, so all his energy sort of poured into that, just like a waterfall falling from a tremendous height. Everything goes over, there's nothing left behind, and it's quite conceivably only after some days that he even started thinking and even started directing his attention to the nature of existence. Maybe, in a sense, that was at a slightly lower level, or at least a different dimension, a different facet of the whole thing. I think also that what we have to try to do is to look at the whole passage a bit more imaginatively. The formula, as it stands, is very cut and dried, but I'm sure the Buddha didn't see things in that way, as very cut and dried. He saw a whole vast process of individual existence. He saw how it comes into existence, how it develops and how it passes away, and how the whole thing is involved with suffering; but he didn't sort of sit down and say to himself 'Ah yes, first of all comes ignorance and then there's the activities.' It was not like this. He saw it in one great direct flush, as it were, and in a very sort of vivid and immediate fashion, of which the actual formula here, as this account now gives us, gives very little hint, especially if we don't use our imagination. I think we have to try to feel our way back into at least some measure of what it must have been like on that occasion when the Buddha's mind started working again - his higher mind, his intuition. He started looking around and he saw

how individual beings came into existence as a result of what they had done in previous lives; how they perpetuated the whole process and how they passed out into another life. [15] He saw all this quite directly, in a way which our stereotyped formula here gives us only a very, very distant glimpse of, a very dim picture indeed.

Chintamani: So really, the outer rim of the wheel of life could be better for study than the actual words.

S: Yes, could be; especially if one is more visually inclined, as it were. One doesn't necessarily understand something better because it's put into words rather than into pictures or images or figure. There is a question that arises here and that is the question of rebirth, because obviously rebirth, in a sense, of a kind, is implied here. These twelve links are distributed over three lives, so it's quite clear that the Buddha's vision, the Buddha's insight, involves an insight into the truth and fact (if one regards it as a fact) of rebirth, or re-becoming, if one uses a more correct Buddhist term. Therefore the question arises (to put it in a form that it often arises): if one is a Buddhist, does one have to believe in rebirth? And if one doesn't believe in rebirth, is one a Buddhist? In a recent letter Subhuti said that he found it difficult to avoid the conclusion that to not believe in rebirth was a micchaditthi (a false view) and therefore if you didn't believe in rebirth you were going against your tenth precept. Subhuti said that he accepted it, even if he'd had no direct experience of it, because he [14] accepted the Buddhist teaching in general; it all seemed to hang together, and he was quite prepared to accept the bits that he couldn't see were actually there. But he said that suppose someone can't accept karma and rebirth, that's a micchaditthi, so in a sense he can't be a Buddhist.

In actual fact it becomes a micchaditthi when you say, 'No, there isn't any rebirth. There can't possibly be any rebirth.' That's the micchaditthi. It only becomes a micchaditthi when you convert your agnosticism into a dogmatic attitude and say that there definitely isn't rebirth: that the doctrine of rebirth is false, that it can't possibly be true - that would be a micchaditthi. The same applies, for instance, to Nirvana or any similar such doctrine or teaching which is beyond one's individual existence, about which we don't feel convinced intellectually; but you must keep an open mind and hope that the light will come. So to adopt that attitude is not a micchaditthi and does not go against your tenth precept. You can be a Buddhist without accepting rebirth, but you can't be a Buddhist if you've definitely made up your mind that there is no such thing as rebirth and you are certainly convinced of that.

Dhammadinna: I think people often misunderstand rebirth, that's why they can't accept it. It's all tied up with ideas of some 'thing' being reborn.[15]

S: That really is a hoary old chestnut. They seem not to be able to grasp that, or to see it actually as a contradiction. (Something else that came up in Subhuti's letter was that he has been asked to speak at the Buddhist Society's summer school about the anatta doctrine.) I really think this is a red herring. Historically, the anatta doctrine is there, but it seems not to convey anything to anyone in modern times - not put in that way, not as it stands: that there is no 'atta'. Well, what is this 'atta' that is supposed not to be their? Well, you know yourself, you exist, you've got feelings and emotions, thoughts; you recognize that they are a process, they don't stand still, they're changing, evolving, all the time. That's 'anatta' if you want to use that word, but if you just take it literally that there is something not there, then how do you reincarnate, because whatever reincarnates isn't there, so you can't have reincarnation etc., and

you just get into a muddle. So I think one shouldn't be encouraged to have lectures on 'anatta'.

I've mentioned on other occasions that on one of our retreats we had a girl coming along from Reading University who was fascinated by the anatta doctrine and that had really drawn her into Buddhism, and she realized on the retreat after meditating that what had drawn her to the anatta doctrine was her own self-hatred. She liked to be told that she wasn't there. She was negating herself with the help [16] of the anatta doctrine: I'm not there. What I thought was me is just a big hole here. I'm not there, I annihilate myself because I hate myself so much; and she realized that for herself... (words indecipherable)

Then of course you can say, how can you practise Metta Bhavana? There's no you, there's no anybody else, how can you practise metta if beings are all unreal and not there? But you get that one even in the East. They ARE there - how can you say that they are not? In some remote metaphysical, transcendental dimension that you can't even glimpse at the moment, well, maybe not, but at present they ARE, so you work within your existing framework and if there is an 'anatta' state you'll get there by practising your Metta Bhavana to beings that you feel do actually exist, and so on. I think this anatta teaching, as it has come down to us in some Buddhist texts, is just a red herring. It just confuses the issue, especially that illustration which does occur in the scriptures, but is most unfortunate, of the chariot and its path - that you only need a religious path. Well, this just won't do in the light of modern philosophy and so on. It's much too simplistic, and if you take it literally it's just a sort of negativism, mechanistic. So you can't accept it - not literally - you have to say, 'All right, accepting that the Buddha did use this argument occasionally, well, what was he getting at, what was the [17] spirit of it?' - but not take it literally. It does sometimes seem as though there is lots that needs rephrasing and just put in a completely new, direct way, though fully preserving the meaning and intent and spirit of the original teaching.

Dukkha, you will notice here is translated 'ill'. Dukkha is usually translated 'suffering', 'unsatisfactoriness', 'pain'; but 'ill' I don't really like - but anyway dukkha is difficult to translate.

p.2: '... this verse of uplift etc.' Here there is a certain association of the verse with the prose because it refers to 'thing with its cause'. Sahetu dhammam. 'Sa' with 'hetu' is cause and 'dhammam' is thing or phenomenon, so there is that connection, but at the same time this seems to be in a different world with this particular verse. For instance, you notice the use of the word Brahmin. It's as though the Buddha is calling himself (if it is the Buddha speaking) - he's referring to himself as - a Brahmin. The word Buddha, or even the word Bhagavan, doesn't occur at all, and this may well reflect an actual historical process. The word 'Buddha' originally had a much more general meaning than it later assumed in Buddhist literature and Buddhist scriptures. It didn't mean the Enlightened one who had realized Nirvana; it just meant a sort of wise man in a very general sort of way, not in a highly specialized way which it later on came to imply. Bhagavan was [18] used also in a very general way for a respectable person. We get instances of this here and there in the Pali texts where the older usage persists. (I think there is one in this book too.) In the same way with various other words: 'Arahat' had a very general, broad meaning - a worthy person, a worshipful person - but eventually it was applied to one who had actually realized Nirvana. It's as though this verse goes right back to the very early days of Buddhism, to the very early days of the Buddha's post-Enlightenment career, when the Buddha himself and his disciples were still using the old Brahminical terminology.

Aryamitra: Presumably 'Brahmin' doesn't only refer to caste.

S: At the Buddha's time, it seems as though there was a great sort of conflict. There is the well-known definition 'a Brahmin is a knower of Brahma'; this may be very late. What Brahmin originally meant is not agreed. It goes right back into Vedic times. It seems originally to have suggested a sort of Shaman-like figure, a sort of inspired seer; it could be just a wise man, a rishi; but by the time of the Buddha himself this had become very debased and the Buddha protested against the debased sort of Brahmin, the Brahmin by birth; but he fully upheld the ideal of the real Brahmin. In the Dhammapada there is the Brahma-vagga - the Chapter of the Brahmin - and the Brahmin is equated with the [19] samana - the ideal person, the ideal man, the realized man, the Enlightened man. It's as though we can see quite clearly that the Buddha was trying to upgrade the word Brahmin. I think we can also say that he failed, historically, because the whole weight of what became orthodox Brahmanism, orthodox Hinduism, was much too strong for him and he wasn't able, or rather Buddhism wasn't able, to keep the word Brahmin in a purely spiritual sense. It was definitely appropriated by certain hereditary castes. But here we see the Buddha as it were spontaneously using the word Brahmin for himself, at the time of his Enlightenment, if in fact the work does go back to that time: 'In sooth when things grow plain (clear) to the ardent, musing Brahmin'. This is much too weak. The translation really falls down here. 'Musing' here translates 'jhana' which is the Sanskrit 'dhyana'.

(Break in recording)

... possibly - it's all interconnected I'm sure because in the case of the halos of flames around the Tibetan Tantric wrathful deities it is said they are burning up the samsara. What emanates from them is light, but as soon as that light sort of touches the samsara it sort of bursts into flames; it's a bit like that.

I also heard a quite extraordinary story about a yogini I stayed with. I heard it from people who actually witnessed the occurrence, so I'll just tell it for what it's [20] worth, but this flame business comes into it. This yogini sometimes didn't eat for months on end (this is also known in the case of some well-known Christian mystics in reformation times even); it's called inedia, non-eating. She didn't eat anything for nine months and her disciples got really worried (you know what disciples are!), so they kept pressing her to eat, so she said in the end, 'Okay, bring some rotis (that is, chapattis). So they brought her some straight from the kitchen, one by one, so they were nice and hot, and she ate about forty. Usually a quite hefty man won't eat more than twelve or fifteen at the most, and an ordinary person five or six; and she ate forty. Then she said, 'Come on, bring some more rotis,' and they brought even more and it went up to about eighty. They started really getting afraid so they said, 'please something will happen, please stop.' So she said, 'There's no satisfying you people, when I didn't eat you wanted me to eat and now that I'm eating just to please you, you want me to stop. All right, give me just one more.' So they told me themselves that they brought this last roti, and what do you think she did? She put it on her head and a flame shot up and it was burnt to ashes and that was that. They said that they all saw this. So what is one to make of it? But what is interesting is that whether it literally happened or whether they projected it all, a flame shot up from the crown of her head, which is quite significant either way, whether it did [21] literally happen or whether it was a sort of symbolical fame, which was just sort of projected. I've also seen photographs taken of her where there is a glowing disc, just here, has come out in the photograph, which wasn't there when the photograph was taken.

So you get in this verse this idea of everything becoming clear, all doubts going, because there is only doubt when you don't know, when you don't experience. You get the idea of this tremendous fiery energy aroused and this higher state of consciousness in which you are constantly dwelling, and becoming Enlightened, becoming a true Brahmin. So you're at a very archaic level of Indian thought and expression, though the experience behind it, the Buddha's experience, is as it were something unique. He's just making use of whatever language lies to hand. There's no such thing as Buddhism, there's no such thing as a Buddhist terminology, or a separate Buddhist tradition. He's just taking the words that have come down from the Vedas and Upanishads and using those. It's pre-Buddhist Buddhism, you can say, or pre-Buddhistic Buddhism.

You'll notice that in these little scriptures there's quite a bit of repetition, but never mind, let's carry on.

Sutta 1.2

S: 'On a certain occasion etc.' It's the time just after the Enlightenment. There's very little difference here. The difference is that in this prose passage it's contemplating the chain of conditioned [22] co-production, of dependent origination, in reverse order - undoing the whole chain - and this little difference is reflected in the verse which refers to 'the wane of causes', that is, the waning of the causes that bring about the whole process of birth, death, and so on.

Sutta 1.3

S: We've had three sections now and they are all concerned with what happened at Uruvela under the bodhi-tree, after the Buddha had been seated there for seven days after his Enlightenment, and these three events take place during the three watches of the night, the first section dealing with the first watch, the second the second watch, and the third, the third. We have the same sort of subdivision in other texts when it speaks of the Enlightenment itself. During the first watch of the night, the Buddha saw his own previous lives back and back, and in the second watch of the night he saw beings being born and then dying and then being reborn according to their deeds. In the third watch of the night he realized that he'd destroyed the asavas, the defilements, and was Enlightened. It seems as though this passage follows the same sort of pattern except that it's seven days later - the three watches of the night, the three sort of phrases. The prose parts are especially concerned with conditioned co-production in direct order, reverse order, and both together. It makes the point that it's as though conditioned co-production is the sort of first thing understood, or the first way in which things are seen as soon as one sort of moves from the direct sense of Enlightenment [23] and just starts looking around. You see the conditions, you see them as arising and as passing away in dependence on causes, arising when the causes are there and passing away when the causes are no longer there, and that's the key to Enlightenment. But the verse adds something: 'In sooth when things grow plain to the ardent, musing Brahmin, routing the host of Mara doth he stand, just as the sun when lighting up the sky.' Here there's a sort of image. You get this image of routing the hosts of Mara. You get a sort of mythological image. It's figurative speech, and obviously it's the sort of germ of what is later - I won't say elaborated into, but expanded into perhaps - the whole episode of Mara's temptation and Mara's attack. Probably this is the oldest reference to it. 'Routing the hosts of Mara does he stand just as the sun when lighting up the sky.' So here, in this verse, you see the Buddha as it were from

outside. The first two verses describe his inner experience and then what it looks like as it were from the outside to the possible spectator. You've also got the solar imagery, the imagery of light, the sun, the Buddha compared with the sun, which points the way forward to the Vairocana Buddha, the Sun Buddha. So there's quite a lot here in very sort of germinal, very archaic form. If we just read the three verses we get a very definite impression:

'In sooth when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin,
His doubts all vanish since he knows thing-with-its-cause.
In sooth when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin,
His doubts all vanish since he knows the wane of causes.[24]

In sooth when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin,
Routing the hosts of Mara doth he stand,
Just as the sun when lighting up the sky.'

You're left with the image of the sun in the middle of the sky. There's no clouds, just the sun radiating its light in all directions, having overcome the clouds. That's the sort of image or picture of Enlightenment. There's no analysis, there's no concepts, you're just left with that picture which is very powerful and very effective even though it's so condensed, just sketched in with very broad strokes as it were. You can begin to see even in the first three sections a great difference of level if you like (certainly a difference of approach) between the prose part and the verse.

Now what about this causal formula? You've got it in direct order, in reverse order, and both together, but there's something missing; that's only half the story. What about the progressive series, which you get in some other portions of the scriptures? They don't appear. The possibility therefore is that these particular prose passages were compiled when (apparently quite early in the history of the Theravada School) that positive series was more or less forgotten, or at least not taken very much notice of. The process is quite definitely there in the Pali scriptures themselves but for some reason or other there's the negative emphasis beginning to predominate, but in the case of the verses the question doesn't arise, because the whole thing is still so general and doesn't go into details conceptually. You've just got a very broad general picture. One has to [25] read these texts a little bit critically, bearing these sorts of things in mind.

You can quite well understand the compilers of this collection starting off with what they considered most important, and, quite rightly, they put the Buddha's Enlightenment first, and they seem to have had at their disposal two sets of traditions - the verses and the prose part - and they fitted them together as best they could; but in this case we can see a certain difference of level, a certain gap. Of course, despite the story of the first council and Ananda reciting everything, it's much more likely that different communities made their own collections in the early days. In fact we see this happening (or rather there is an account of it happening) even in the Udāna itself, as we shall see a bit later on. We shall see that the Buddha asks a monk to recite what he knows of the teaching (not the scriptures) and he actually recites a couple of chapters of what is now the Sutta Nipāta. So it's quite clear that different groups of monks made their own collections of the teachings, which they learned by heart; different groups of monks, different parts of north-east India, and much later on they all pooled what they remembered and they were all compiled in one vast collection, one version of which we have in the Pali canon.

Chintamani: At the time of one of the Councils - when the question was raised that between meditation and the scriptures, if one had to be dispensed with which should it be, and they decided meditation - since the monks knew [26] right at the beginning what were the results of meditation, it somehow seems to contradict their final decision.

S: This was a quite late council - I think it was in Ceylon actually and I think it was a rather academic question at that time, but I think that what they had in mind was not meditation in the highest sense of Enlightenment, but meditation in the jhana sense, which can be lost. They made the point that if you had the scriptures, you had the guide to the whole path. It was there and if the scriptures were going to be preserved then the guide to the whole path was there and anybody could follow it; but if you only had people meditating, well, that's more or less the situation that you had before the Buddha. There was access to the higher superconscious levels, but the transcendental experience itself remained untouched until the Buddha came along; that was his great significance, his great contribution if you like. It was the study of the scriptures and the theoretical study of the whole path and the fact that there was a transcendental dimension outside meditation even - the higher teachings of yoga. If it was a question of either that or meditation experience in the ordinary sense, not the scriptures versus Enlightenment. When I told that story originally I wanted to emphasize the importance of study at a time when hardly even any order members read a book on Buddhism (except the really exciting things like Lobsang Rampa!).[27]

Sutta 1.4

S: This is another tree - the goatherd's banyan tree. Early tradition sort of depicts the Buddha as moving around in the vicinity of Uruvela and sleeping under a tree, but a different one, and the eventual fully developed version is: seven days, seven trees, seven weeks in a sort of archetypal pattern. But it seems very probable that he was moving about from the foot of one tree to the foot of another tree and exploring different dimensions of the Enlightenment experience. A lot was happening to him: various things were opening up, different dimensions were opening up in different dimensions as it were, and there he was just moving around, sitting for a while under this tree, a while under that tree, and all the time all these things were happening and going on. It may be a week here a week there, roughly, under different trees. Early accounts mention four weeks, four trees and the later ones seven weeks, seven trees. Anyway, now he's under the goatherd's banyan tree and along comes a Brahmin. There's a whole sort of query about this Brahmin, Huhunkajatiko Brahmin. The note tells us that he might have been called Huhunka because he always went about saying 'humph', sort of sniffing and carping and criticizing belonged to a clan of Brahmins called Huhunka because they recited the hung-matra; or that it might even be a corruption of Susukka, because apparently there were other Brahmins known as Susukka Brahmins, and Huhunka might have been a corruption of Susukka (this is the sort of thing that scholars go into and write papers about). Anyway, he was a Brahmin, that point is quite clear - a Brahmin by birth, a Brahmin by caste - and he came to the Buddha, and on meeting him greeted him courteously, and after the exchange of greetings and courtesies, stood [28] at one side. As he thus stood, that Brahmin said this to the Exalted One, 'Pray Master Gotama ...' 'Master' is probably 'bo'(?), a common mode of address, and Brahmins used it among themselves, it was quite polite, but he doesn't say Bhagavan, he's not recognizing him as the Enlightened One (well, no one knows presumably so far), he's just saying in a quite polite and respectful way, to what extent is one a Brahmin? - he can probably see that there is something about the Buddha - and again, what are the things that constitute a Brahmin? 'Whereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of

it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift: A Brahmin who has barred out evil things...' The note here says 'Bahita-papa, a traditional and fanciful etymology of brahmana'. The more usual sort of traditional etymology is: a Brahmin is one who is not tainted; who calls, who invoked the gods. It also comes from a root bahu (though this is again a matter of dispute, though it's a traditional etymology). Bahu means great, to grow, to swell, to be inflated. So a Brahmin is the swollen one, the inflated one, that is to say the one who experiences a sort of divine afflatus (as we say nowadays), who is filled with a sort of breath of inspiration, and breathes out the verses of the Vedas and so on and so forth. This is one of the sort of traditional etymologies for Brahmin. But here there is a popular, non-scientific etymology: a Brahmin is one who is bahu, who is excluded all evil or all sin, who is bahu, so the Buddha refers to that: 'A Brahmin who has barred out evil things is not a man of [29] humph and pshaw'. This is the 'humph' - he's not a Huhunka man. You can take this in two ways. If the Huhunkajati Brahmin is one who is always going 'humph', the Buddha is saying, a brahmin is not a man who goes around saying 'humph', as you do. Or, if Huhunka is the name of a particular caste or Susukka is the name of a particular caste, the Buddha could be saying that a Brahmin is a man who has barred out evil things, not someone who is born into a particular caste such as yours; so you can take it either way.

'Whose is no stain...' This is a very ancient way of describing the Enlightened man, the ideal man. One who's got no stain, no moral or spiritual imperfection or impurity. 'Who has the self controlled.' This is not self-control in our sense, the rather repressive sense. Who has a self which is controlled, a tamed, a disciplined self.

'In Vedas versed': who knows the Vedas. This is subsequently usually explained as the three Vedas, but not the Rigveda, Samaveda, and Yajurveda (there were only three at the time of the Buddha, not four), but three knowledges. That is to say, the knowledge of one's previous lives, the knowledge of the past, present and future karma of beings, and knowledge of the destruction of the asavas. In the Digha-Nikaya and Majjhima-Nikaya, knowledge of the Vedas is understood in this way and a Brahmin is said to know the Vedas in this sense. Here it's not clear, it simply says 'in the Vedas versed', one who is versed in the Vedas; but in which sense, whether in the old Hindu sense or the Buddhistic sense, is not clear. 'Who lives [30] the Brahma life,' that is, as in the Sanskrit, brahmacharya, which usually means nowadays, celibacy. In the Pali texts, brahmachariya is a word constantly used; sometimes it's used in the sense of celibacy, but more often it's the general term for the whole spiritual life. Brahma here means something exalted, high, noble, sublime, and it means an exalted or sublime state of mind, a way of life based upon that exalted, sublime state of mind, and so on. A way of life, a walk, a career aiming at the state of Brahma - in other words a high, sublime, spiritual state. For instance, when the Buddha sent out the first sixty Enlightened disciples, he said, 'Make known the perfectly pure brahmacharya, preach the brahmacharya.' So this is the Brahma life: to follow or practise the Brahmacharya, the sublime, noble life - you could say, the spiritual life in the highest sense. It implies celibacy (certainly in the Buddhist context) but it certainly isn't confined to it: 'tis he may say his is the Brahma-faith'. He is a Brahmavadin - one who believes in Brahman, believes in the sublime, believes in the spiritual, practises it, follows it. 'Brahma-faith' isn't a very good translation, but it's very difficult to translate Brahmavadin ... 'for whom there are no false excrescences in all the world'. 'Ussada' - moral warts, the commentary says, such as craving, anger, delusion, conceit, and false views. But what is the idea? The idea is of evil as something external. You get this in one or two places in the Pali canon (though not in very many) where he speaks of the mind - the citta-vijnana - being fundamentally pure, and the klesas and the [32] impurities which come in from outside. So

the Brahmin, the Enlightened man, is one who has realized that all these impurities don't belong to me, they are just excrescences, they are nothing to do with me, my own inner mind is pure, and who realizes that pure inner mind and discards all the excrescences, all those conditions which don't really belong to him in the true sense, in the deepest sense.

Let's try and paraphrase that verse. A Brahmin, an ideal man, an Enlightened man, who is usually considered to be, or defined as, one who has excluded all evil, is not of a carping nature (according to one interpretation) or he doesn't belong to the particular Brahmin caste by birth. He is someone who is completely pure and free from stains, who has a developed and disciplined self, who has higher spiritual knowledge, who lives devoted to the spiritual life realizing sublime states of consciousness, who is a follower and a devotee of that sublime state of consciousness and who has realized that all evil things don't belong to him - they are excrescences - and who has discarded them: he is the Brahmin, he is the ideal man, he is the Enlightened man. This is roughly what the sutta is saying.

Aryamitra: He is the Enlightened man?

S: Well, that is suggested, in as much as, in the previous section, the Buddha has applied the term Brahmin to himself. When the Brahmin [32] comes along and asks, 'What is a Brahmin?' obviously he's not clear or sure in his own mind. At the same time, he's got no idea of Enlightenment, because he himself isn't Enlightened, so the Brahmin is a bit in the dark. The Buddha takes up his term Brahmin and gives it his own content, his own definition, and makes it into a term for the Enlightened man himself. In other words the Buddha is putting to use an un-Buddhistic expression - his new wine into old bottles, but, eventually, that was not successful because the debased meaning of the term Brahmin reasserted itself later on. So perhaps it would have been better if the Buddha had coined (though probably that wasn't possible) an entirely new term. Buddhists later on did reserve the term Buddha for the Enlightened one in the Buddhist sense and they dropped the word Brahmin, even though it was there in the scriptures as a synonym for the Buddha, but it was not in general usage just because of that confusion with the caste Brahmins. Even now, in India, a Brahmin by birth will say, 'Brahmin doesn't mean Brahmin by birth, it's a Brahmajani, that's the real Brahmin', but the fact that the word Brahmin is used at all, however defined, means that it helps the old system to perpetuate itself. You're much better off with a new term entirely, which the Buddhists eventually realized.

Chintamani: What about Tathagatha?[33]

S: Well, again that's a bit doubtful. It means 'one who has thus come, or thus gone', but that also seems to have been in general usage, and not just applied to the Buddha in the traditional Buddhist sense. Originally, there was no word for the Buddha, because he represented a new phenomenon, something unique, something for which there wasn't any term or name, so various names were tried out. You called him a Brahmin or a wise man, a Tathagatha, they were all applied, and eventually the name that stuck was Buddha and then Tathagatha and Jina. But 'Jina' was also used by the Jains in a rather different sense for their perfect man, and then when we translate it all into English we put Enlightened One. Well, if you use the word enlightenment in English, you invite misunderstanding in the same sort of way, because of eighteenth-century rationalistic enlightenment. For instance, I remember a report written by a Sinhalese monk about his visit to Europe and he said that in the course of his tour he had encountered many enlightened Western Buddhists. He was using the word 'enlightened' quite

unmindfully, in the eighteenth-century sense, meaning rationalistic intellectual people, I would say, not at all Buddhist: Buddhist-Society-type people with a very severe rationalistic approach. And he was describing them as enlightened Western Buddhists, meaning they belong to the intelligentsia and were rationalistic in outlook, and he was rather glad that they were calling themselves Buddhists. So that's just the same sort of confusion; if we speak of the Enlightened One and Enlightenment, we can very easily be misunderstood [34] because that word has its own meaning in English already and that meaning is always asserting itself and pulling, as it were. There's still a sort of tug-of-war going on, whether we succeed in giving our full Buddhist meaning to that word Enlightenment. Otherwise, if you say that the Buddha's Enlightened, it's putting him perhaps (it suggests) on the same level as Voltaire or Diderot or someone like that, or even Robespierre. But what are we to do? Apart from retaining the Sanskrit or Pali word, or if you say translate the Buddha as 'the Lord'. I remember Swami Vivekananda when he was in the West wrote a letter to his disciples in Calcutta who started calling Ramakrishna in English Lord Ramakrishna for Bhagavan Ramakrishna, and he wrote, 'What is this? If you call him Lord, why don't you call him Earl or Duke?' He was very scathing about it. 'Lord' has got a different connotation. To say Lord Buddha doesn't have the right sort of meaning at all. Lord Jesus: maybe even that doesn't sound very good; Lord Buddha sounds even worse. Bhagavan isn't Lord and it's not Exalted One, it's more like 'richly endowed one'.

There is definitely a very great difficulty of communication and putting across and having to sort of struggle with language all the time, especially when a spiritual tradition goes from one culture to another, as it were, or from one part of the world to another. You can just imagine, supposing someone new to Buddhism just wanted to find out and comes along, even to the Friends, wanders around the bookstall and picks up a book. What sort of impression would he get [35] without going into all the things that we are going into now? 'A Brahmin, who has barred out evil things, is not a man of humph and pshaw'. - 'What's this? What's this got to do with Buddhism? What are these 'false excrescences'?' The footnote tells you 'moral warts' it explains such as raga, dosa, etc. but he doesn't translate, he just leaves it all in Pali, so you are in the dark, you are exactly where you were before. Any comments on this section?

Chintamani: He'd obviously got a reputation in the area while he was sitting under the tree.

S: Yes. The word must have gone around. I'm assuming that people had been supplying him with food (I think that can be taken for granted). We know that Sujata brought along the milk-rice on the eve of the Enlightenment, and though we are not told, various other village folk were just probably coming up with something to eat now and then quietly going away; so the word probably got around that there was a holy man seated underneath that tree and that he'd been there for so long and he looked a bit different from other people, and so a local Brahmin maybe came along, or maybe a wandering Brahmin, came to see what was happening, who was this, and asked. We can conjure up the picture quite easily. Here's the Buddha who's had this tremendous experience, which we now call the experience of Enlightenment, he's struggling to communicate it - he's experiencing different phases of it at the same time. He's having to use their [36] sort of archaic Vedic terms as the only ones to hand, and he had to try and communicate his ideal, his spiritual ideal, to a visiting Brahmin who asks, 'What is a true Brahmin?' He tries to explain the true Brahmin in terms of his own experience: this is what Brahmanism is all about, and should be all about - Enlightenment. If you read between the lines and really delve into it you can get quite a vivid picture and yet, I think, pretty close to what was actually happening around that time.

Sutta 1.5

S: We see that the scene has changed; the Buddha is staying at Savatthi in north-western India at the vihara called Jeta, built by Anathapindika, so it means that it's several years after his Enlightenment and there are a number of disciples; and the Buddha happened to see a number of the disciples coming and they are enumerated. There is Sariputta and then Moggallana the Great; usually 'Maha' Moggallana or 'Maha' Kassapa means that there are two, and so to distinguish one is called Maha and one is called Cula. It's like Smith Major and Smith Minor. It doesn't mean anything more than that, though Moggallana the Great makes it sound a bit like Peter the Great or something like that, but it doesn't convey that in Pali. So when he saw them all coming along in the distance, the Buddha said, 'Monks, these are Brahmins coming, these are Brahmins coming.' It may be that they had been talking about Brahmins and [37] what was a true Brahmin, and just as he happened to look up, the Buddha saw these great Enlightened disciples coming and he said, 'Look, these are the Brahmins coming.' So that must have been how it all happened. And there was a monk, a Brahmin by birth, present so he said, 'Pray Sir, to what extent is one Brahmin, and what are the things that constitute a Brahmin?' and then the Buddha breathed forth this verse: 'Barring out evil things, who ever mindful fare' (those who are mindful all the time - Awakened, Enlightened, bond-free) 'such in the world are surely Brahmins.' In other words, he is emphasizing that Enlightenment is the true Brahminhood, not anything to do with birth. It's the same sort of redefinition, taking the word Brahmin and giving it this incomparably higher meaning. It's also noticeable that some of the disciples that he saw coming were Brahmins by birth. For instance, we know that Sariputta and Moggallana were Brahmins by birth, so was Kassapa. I'm not sure of the next few, but Devadatta was not a Brahmin by birth, he was a Kshatriya, and so was Ananda a Kshatriya. There might have been even other castes represented, but the Buddha called them all Brahmins, because they were all Arhants, all Enlightened.

You notice that though the scene has changed we are still concerned with Brahmin. This word Brahmin comes in all these verses; that seems to be the sort of thread connecting them. You can understand that the early Buddhists (even the Buddha himself in a way) were quite concerned about what word to use for the Enlightened man. [38] They tried at first just to appropriate the word Brahmin and upgrade it in meaning and encourage Brahmins by birth to think in terms of being real Brahmins, i.e. to strive for Enlightenment. This is very characteristic of Buddhism sort of trying to take over whatever actually existed (whether in the way of terminology or custom and tradition) and improve it and give it a nobler leaning; not abolish it, not criticize it, not go against it, but to try to sort of lead people on from there; but it isn't always successful, just a very strong counter-movement. Perhaps in India we may say Buddhism wasn't quite militant enough and the Brahmins eventually got the better of Buddhism and Buddhism disappeared.

Dhammadinna: How strong was the caste system at that time? Was it very rigid?

S: It wasn't nearly as rigid as it afterwards became, but it was rigid enough it seems.

Dhammadinna: So it was quite a feat to get together people of different castes.

S: Yes, and the Brahmins, even at that time, objected to the Buddha teaching, on the grounds that he was not a Brahmin by birth, and teaching was a monopoly of the Brahmins. Lower castes were definitely looked down upon and the Brahmins definitely regarded themselves as

higher caste. One of the reasons that they gave was that they were [39] of fair complexion, and the other lower castes were of darker complexion.

Dhammadinna: It must have meant going against quite a lot of conditioning for people who were Brahmins to be considered equal with people who weren't.

S: Yes, and it is also remarkable that quite a lot of Brahmins did become followers of the Buddha and some of his most prominent disciples were Brahmins. It's quite clear that they had a very definite spiritual and cultural tradition and they were in a way the clerisy (to use a later term). They were the 'educated' people. They were certainly selfish as a class, but the class itself did contain some quite gifted individuals and they did take to Buddhism, no doubt, but the caste as a whole seemed to remain relatively unaffected.

Buddhadasa: From this list, is there any suggestion of seniority or hierarchy in any way?

S: Well, Sariputta and Moggallana, in the Theravada tradition, are enumerated as the chief disciples, and Kassapa is probably the next distinguished - the great ascetic who lived in the forest wearing rag robes, all by himself. Ananda presumably comes last because he isn't technically an Arhant, well neither is Devadatta. Notice [40] Devadatta is put before Ananda. Maybe he was doing better than Ananda at that stage, but he came a cropper later on. Anuruddha was famous for his psychic powers.

Bodhishri: How long a time had passed since the Buddha's Enlightenment?

S: I imagine it must be six or seven years at least, but that's my guess. Savatthi became important as a centre a bit later on, after Anathapindika had presented his park and built the lodging - not a monastery but a lodging - some hut. Probably the original Buddhist bhikkhus in India stayed in little leaf shelters in the forest. They didn't have monasteries and so we shouldn't translate the word vihara in that context as a monastery and imagine a large sort of palatial building.

Sutta 1.6

S: Rajagaha - that's Rajagriha, as we call it nowadays, another famous dwelling place of the Buddha.

The scene has shifted to Rajagriha where there is the famous Bamboo Grove vihara or lodging and the episode concerns Maha Kassapa who was famous for his asceticism. He was the most ascetic, most simply living, of all the Buddha's direct disciples, and on this occasion he happened to be sick, so nevertheless, despite the sickness, he goes out as usual for alms. The monk goes with his begging [41] bowl into the town or the village and he just goes from house to house collecting sufficient food for the day. And now occurs something quite extraordinary, probably quite unacceptable to many people, 'as many as 500 devas eagerly busied themselves about the alms-food of the venerable Kassapa the Great'. Now in most of the Pali scriptures there are constant references to devas and gods, divine beings. One can actually take it quite literally or one can take it symbolically and so on, but it is characteristic that the devas are especially concerned about or interested in the Arhants and the Buddha. The devas are, as it were, always buzzing around. They know that the Buddha and the Arhants, the Enlightened disciples, are more highly developed than themselves. They are

perfectly aware of that. They look up to them and they are always anxious to be of service, and sometimes they can see and understand things that ordinary human beings can't. So in the case of Maha Kassapa, there is a whole cloud of devas sort of buzzing around, and as soon as they see Kassapa sick and frail going off to Rajagaha to beg for alms from door to door - quite a laborious business for a sick old man - they think, 'Ah, here's an opportunity, we can fill his bowl by magic so he won't have any trouble and we can earn a great deal of merit.' But Kassapa rejects that; that's cheating. There's a similar story about the Buddha when he was meditating and practising asceticism before his Enlightenment when the devas offer to inject a sort of celestial nourishment into [42] him when he was fasting and he said, 'No, that would be cheating', and he rejects it. It's as though the devas represent the magical side of existence which the Enlightened person could invoke, but he deliberately doesn't. He just relies on ordinary human methods and means. It's as though Maha Kassapa, being Enlightened, could conjure up food for himself, as it were have everything laid on, but he doesn't. Even though he's ill and sick he goes out begging as usual. Where does he go? Into the poorest quarter where the food he is likely to get is going to be the roughest quality. But even though he's sick he goes and begs there rejecting all these other possibilities. Whether there are actually devas, or whether they represent magic or not, the meaning is quite clear, that the spiritually developed person doesn't make use of either his spiritual development or anything associated with it in order to aggrandize himself personally. He just doesn't do that. In so far as his own personal needs are concerned he just relies on ordinary everyday human factors, so he just goes out begging in the poorest quarter, in this case. This seems to be what is happening. The Buddha sees this, and presumably he understands it all, so he gives vent to his feelings in this verse: 'Who hath none else to keep,' who isn't responsible for anyone else, nobody else to support, just wanders by himself. 'Who is unknown.' This is quite important. Far from being famous, he's not even known to anybody. This is a sort of virtue, keeping yourself hidden. 'Who is subdued,' that is, in [43] the sense of controlled, self-controlled. 'Fixed in the core.' This is quite interesting. This is an idiom that comes in the Dhammapada and which is very early, but fades out. The word is 'sare' which means pith, like the pith of a tree or a reed, the essence. In the Dhammapada, the word 'sare' is used in the sense of the real. There's a verse which says that he who sees the real in the unreal and he who sees the unreal in the real; here the word is 'asare' and 'sare' which means the pithless and that which is the pith; or the essence-less and that which is the essence. The pith, the essence, the core, the heart of the matter, all these sorts of term sort of point to Nirvana or Enlightenment. There are several expressions in Pali about being concerned about the core of the matter, the pith, the heart, the essence of the matter. 'Sare' is a very strong and meaningful word, but it's dropped later on, it sort of fades out of the picture, but it's the word that comes here. The one who is 'fixed in the core', established at the heart of things, really centred, transcendently centred; who takes his stand on the essence of things, who sticks to the essence or things. Kassapa is doing that in the practical everyday way, almost a Zen-like sort of way. He's sticking to the basics, the essence of the matter, which is getting food - begging something to eat and keep body and soul together, or body and anatta together - but he's also in a much higher sense sticking to the essence of things, sticking to Nirvana, established in Enlightenment. So 'fixed in the core' [44] (which the commentary paraphrases as 'liberated in the core') is a characteristic of the Enlightened person and even of the Brahmin. 'In whom the cankers are destroyed.' The cankers are the asavas: desire for sensuous experience or thirst for sensuous experience, for conditioned existence as such, and for annihilation. These are explained in the Survey under asavas or asravas, the taints, the impurities - spewed forth, vomited forth because they don't really belong to him, 'tis him I call a brahmana.' Again, the Buddha is trying to inject his new significance into this ancient term in applying it to Kassapa.

Chintamani: This reminds me of the wheel of life and the deva world which is impermanent, and this sutta perhaps shows that Kassapa is not of the wheel, so he's not indulging in that top world.

S: Yes, not benefiting from it even though he's got access to it and it's at his disposal; this whole sort of archetypal magical realm is all at his disposal, but he's not making use of it. Of course, that's just Kassapa, that also must be clear. There are other disciples who may or who will. It's not that you mustn't or you shouldn't; it's good if you don't, but it's not bad if you do. For instance, Padmasambhava made full use of that, he drew on that, utilized it, not for personal aggrandizement, but to spread the Dharma. But Kassapa was a specialist in asceticism, and that was [45] good, he was an example of that, a sort of shining light in this respect.

'Who hath none else to keep.' Perhaps this doesn't mean very much to us, but the ancient Indian was very conscious of his responsibility of looking after other people, especially a family man. There was no insurance, there was no Social Security, your dependants were your dependants and you had no means of limiting their number, your own children. They just sort of multiplied and you were having to think of people, to look after people, feed people, and this was a very big thing in those days; and sometimes there were droughts, famines, wars. It was quite difficult, and so to be free from all that and not have anyone to think about and to look after. From a spiritual point of view, if you took it positively, not just negatively, it would be a very great thing, so there's a special sort of word for it: anannapasin, not having to look after, or nourish or feed or support, anybody else. Think what it must be like for someone who maybe for years and years has to support his wife and children, and then of course there's your parents, don't forget you have to look after them when they are old and any other relation too who happens to come along. You've got a whole large circle of dependants and you've always having to think and worry, and then one day you've given it all up, you just hand over to somebody else and you just go out on your own. It's a tremendous relief as it were. Nowadays, it isn't sort of possible, [46] or we don't have this sort of possibility of leaving dependants in the old Indian sense because we know they'll be looked after. No one's going to starve. If the worst comes to the worst, Social Security, friends will rally round,... but in ancient India you didn't have this assurance. If you left your family, well maybe your eldest son would be a good son and look after everybody, but maybe not. It was a bit of a risk - you did really leave and not just hand over to the state, sort of thing. There was no state in that sense. The state meant the revenue man collecting taxes, not giving anything. The king thought he was doing his bit if he protected you against outside enemies, and didn't plunder you too much, that was all.

So in the conception of a Brahmin here, we see (that is when in the conception of the Enlightened person) one who isn't responsible for anybody else on the mundane level, who isn't known to anybody - no name and fame - who is subdued, self-controlled, and established in the core, the essence of things - probably that's the most important of all - who has destroyed the asavas and the defilements, he is the Brahmin.

Dhammadinna: 'Who is unknown' - I think that's quite important today when there are a lot of people making capital out of spiritual things.

S: Yes, that's true. Someone once referred to a television personality [47] as being well known for being well known, and sometimes it's just like that, an entirely artificial reputation

in this field or that, or even no field at all, just in the media.

Sutta 1.7

S: 'Yakkha' - again we get a bit of mythology: a yakkha is a particular kind of spirit. I'd like to translate it daimon in the Greek sense. It's not evil. In Indian thought, there's no sort of evil spirit in the Western sense, not even Mara; Mara is mischievous rather than evil. He's a nuisance, but he's not evil in the sense that Satan is meant to be evil. A yakkha is a powerful, awe-inspiring spirit, sometimes almost a sublime spirit, something very much belonging to the world of nature, but powerful and awe-inspiring, a sort of awe-inspiring natural force; and it's rather significant that the Buddha, occasionally, in some older parts of the Pali canon, is himself described as the Yakkha - the Great Spirit, the Great Daimon - because this is the sort of impression he produces on people - of something awe-inspiring and tremendous and a bit fearsome. It's also interesting that some of the earliest Buddha images in India, especially those produced in and around the Mathura area, model the Buddha figure on the archaic yakkha figures, which are large, powerful, awe-inspiring figures of these beings, and the Buddha images are sometimes modelled on that sort of figure, that sort of shape. A yakkha is a sort of awe-inspiring spirit - a rather powerful and terrible spirit - not bad, not evil, but [48] belonging to the world of nature. As might have been expected, there were these shrines set up here and there. There are constant references in the Pali scriptures to shrines. They are usually called cetiyas and we don't take them very seriously, but they are very much in the background of early Buddhism and the Buddha often stayed at these shrines. You get them even now. For instance, you might have just a small structure, with maybe a sacred stone in the middle or something like that, and just enough space for a wandering monk just to spend the night, and the Buddha very often used to stay in places of that sort. Or it may be just a sacred stone set up under a tree and people making offerings there every now and then. India was and is full of shrines of this sort and many were associated with these yakkhas, these sort of powerful nature spirits, if you like.

Recently I was reading about Greece - Heraclitus's history and the life of Apollonius of Tyana (who was a famous Greek teacher), and there were constant references to shrines and little temples all over the place, where local heroes and gods and demigods were honoured, but we don't have that in the modern West because it's all been destroyed by Christianity. And these shrines all represent focuses of energy as it were, and this is quite important on its own level.

Aryamitra: What about barrows?[49]

S: In this country, barrows of course are tombs as it were, but that's a little different though not completely. This is more like sort of ancestor... not exactly worship but certainly commemoration, though maybe there was a sort of worship in ancient times.

Dhammadinna: There are standing stones and circles of trees and so on.

S: We've got the sites and we've got some remains, but there's no actual worship going on, which is not worship in the full sense, it's just sort of recognizing that there are these forces there and recognized by offering something, or something of that sort.

Buddhadasa: There are remnants of superstition like touching wood.

S: Touching wood is supposed to be touching the cross. The cross is often called the wood, the sacred wood, or just the wood.

Chintamani: There are a number of people in the Friends who talk about being in places and feeling something quite strong there.

S: All this is true, but it's a level on which one can get bogged down, so you have to be very careful of that. Not to spend all your time sort of swinging pendulums and saying, 'Oh, gosh, I think this atmosphere is really great. The vibe here is a bit different from the vibe there.' You're just talking all the time in these terms. Well, [50] there's something in it for sure, and it is a level and it is to be recognized, but it's not spiritual or anything remotely like that. But anyway, it's there and you can feel it much more in the country obviously, in an agricultural setting, or an agriculturally based civilization, and we get this here. So we have to feel all this and read this into this opening sentence: 'On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Pava, at Ajakalapa shrine, the abode of the yakkha Ajakalapa. You notice that the shrine is thought of as the actual abode or house of that particular spirit, that he actually lives there, and the Buddha was also staying there.'

You can see the picture. The Buddha was staying at this little shrine at night, right in the middle of the night, this inky night, he's sitting outside - presumably he's meditating or just sitting and it's raining, but presumably he doesn't take any notice, and then this yakkha, this awe-inspiring spirit, draws near and he wants to frighten the Buddha. So how can one interpret this? There's something there in that atmosphere of the shrine, or that spot, which is uncanny, which would make an ordinary man afraid, which would raise his hair, as it were, and the Buddha's sitting there, so is this going to happen to the Buddha? There's even a noise, we are told, a sound, a hair-raising sound, the hullabaloo of this Ajakalapa. Ajakalapa, according to one interpretation, so the note says, means 'goat-cry', it's like the cry of a goat, very eerie, very strange. This particular passage even says 'There's a yakkha! A yakkha's come! ('Goblin' it is translated, [51] which is terrible, but what else is one to do?) There's a daimon here! There's a spirit, an awe-inspiring spirit! But the Buddha doesn't take much notice, he's not at all impressed. The Enlightened person, or the Enlightened mind, is not at all affected by these very strange sort of nature spirit type of phenomena. They don't have any effect as they might have on an ordinary unenlightened man. So he says, 'When he hath reached the goal in all things that are his' - When he has reached the goal in all those things which properly pertain to him, or all those things with which he should properly occupy himself. In other words, when he is Enlightened - 'the Brahmin is beyond this goblin (this yakkha) with his din.' In other words, you are not disturbed by these phenomena. You can go into the uncanniest and eeriest of places and all sorts of things can happen and you are just not affected at all, if you are a real Brahmin or you areally are Enlightened. It links up a little bit with the previous section, because the previous section refers to the gods and sort of not taking advantage of them and their services. Here it's not being afraid of them, or anything on that sort of level. So you can see the very cool attitude of Buddhism, at the highest level, towards ordinary sort of archetypal-cum-magical-cum-spiritist sort of phenomena.

Aryamitra: The word goblin seems to conjure up the right kind of image for me.

S: I think of a goblin as rather small and insignificant.[52]

Jitari: There's a passage in Some Sayings of the Buddha where he is alone in the forest before

he was Enlightened and he overcomes his fear.

S: On that occasion he experienced the fear, but didn't allow it to overcome his mind; but now, after the Enlightenment, he doesn't even experience any fear.

Chintamani: All these little suttas seem like affirmations of Enlightenment, stating the qualities.

S: Yes, and using the word Brahmin or trying to use the word Brahmin, and redefine it.

Sutta 1.8

S: The Pali gives quite a different sort of feel than the English. The English is 'Recluse, support me with our little child,' a demand or order, but the Pali sounds quite different: 'Khudda-puttan hi' which means, sort of 'the little child', but a bit imperfectly, 'samana, posa man ti'. 'The little child, samana, please look after us.' It's more of a pathetic appeal which doesn't come out in the translation at all, the translation is a bit stilted.

There's one quite interesting sort of side-light on Indian psychology. She knows that the child is more important than she is. For the Indian, the child is the ultimate temptation; not the wife, but the son. The son who is going to continue your name, make [53] offerings to you after your death: that's the sort of last tie, not the wife. So she doesn't say, 'Well, here I am.' Therefore she says, 'Support us, support the little child and me.' Then she leaves the child by himself and says, 'Well you support him, he's your child.' But even the child he doesn't take any notice of. Then she says, 'This recluse needs not even his child.' She doesn't say, 'He doesn't even need me.' But the tie with the child, with the son, is felt to be the strongest and, in a way, the last one to be broken. So she turned back, took up the child, and went away. It's perhaps a feeling which isn't so strong nowadays, though it's still quite strong in some quarters; but it was certainly very strong in India. In fact it's still very strong in India - the feeling for the son on the part of the father.

You notice the difference of outlook: the word 'rudeness' here according to the note can be translated in a slightly different way, but it's the former mate, the former wife of Sangamaji, who is held to be at fault. The modern view would be that Sangamaji was at fault: not taking back his child, not looking after them, and so on. But the traditional Indian view, and the Buddhist view, was that she was at fault in trying to draw him back after he had become an ascetic monk.

The verse is another definition of brahmana. The name Sangamaji literally means one who is free from, so the Buddha is saying, as it were, you are true to your name. You are called Sangamaji - bond-free - and you really are bond-free, because you are not pleased when your former wife comes and you are not grieved when she goes. You really are free from bonds. It's interesting that the [54] Buddha refers to the former wife and not to the child. It seems to me that the two don't quite fit - the story and the verse. You can imagine the verse referring to a quite different sort of story, when a woman comes and then goes away with or without the child, though even in quite different circumstances. But the prose part does epitomise the very real conflict, one which must have been very real for many people during the Buddha's day and afterwards, in India. The conflict between the daily life and responsibilities (which WERE responsibilities), and the call of the spiritual life and feeling that one couldn't combine

the two. It was clear choice, a choice that you had to make. We are not told very much about Sangamaji, but it must have been very difficult for him, if he wasn't already Enlightened, to sit there at the foot of the tree. His wife comes and his son is left there and he just doesn't say anything. Maybe there's a tremendous struggle or conflict going on in him all that time. We don't know, we are not told, but the Buddha sees and, if the verses do refer to the episode, he approves. Of course it's quite difficult for the former wife also. She's left, and an Indian wife on her own doesn't have a very easy time to bring up the child in the family. So there is a very real conflict here, but the sympathy of the tradition, or the spiritual sympathy, is very much on the side of the recluse, whereas in modern times, probably in the West, sympathies would probably be rather the other way round. This is one of the questions I was often asked when I came back from India. Why did the Buddha leave his wife and son? Wasn't that an uncompassionate act, and so on and so forth.[55]

Chintamani: How often in Buddhist history have the two been brought together: the spiritual life and the domestic life?

S: I would say authentically very rarely I think. It's really very difficult. I've seen myself, or known, two or three married gurus, but there was tension. It wasn't smooth by any means.

Dhammadinna: Marpa seems to have been an example of this.

S: Except of course that many people aren't sure that Marpa was an Enlightened person, and not just a great scholar who'd been to India and had all the texts and teachings. Even the Tibetans themselves are uncertain about him, not just Western scholars.

Bodhishri: What about Vimalakirti?

S: Well, Vimalakirti may not be historical, that's the difficulty there. It's a beautiful example indeed if it's true, but we don't know, it comes in a late Mahayana scripture. Also, what sort of married life? He only pretended to be married, we are told. He wasn't really married, he only went through the motions. He seemed to be from the outside, but actually he was living just like a monk at home and pretending to be a householder, so that's rather different, isn't it?

Jitari: I was thinking about celibacy and it seems to me that this is something [56] which is more an attitude of mind.

S: The word celibacy in the West, when you associate it with the Catholic Church, and repression and so on and so forth, has an unfortunate ring, but I think we have to be very careful not to go to the other extreme. There is such a tendency on the part of people to do that, I think we have to be very careful all the time. We just want a more positive word. Chastity is an outdated word, I'm afraid. It's a word that raises a laugh unfortunately. As for virginity, well it's even worse than laughable.

Dhammadinna: But doesn't celibacy mean much more than just abstinence from sex? Isn't it an attitude of mind towards all sensual experience?

S: Well, brahmacharya isn't an attitude towards anything on the sense level. The attitude towards things on a sense level is a sort of corollary of brahmacharya you see. Brahmacharya is a state which exists, as it were, in its own right, not as simply orientated towards anything.

One could say that brahmacharya means one who is faring in, or coursing in, or who lives in, or moves in, or has his being in, a certain level of superconsciousness. If you are on that level of super-consciousness, well obviously your orientation is not towards the sense level. You don't have any 'idea' about celibacy, you're just living on another plane; so because you're living on that plane you're celibate, but you'd probably think, if someone [57] asked, 'Are you celibate?', why yes, sure, of course, I suppose I must be.

Jitari: I suppose it's a bit like being taken by surprise when one is confronted by vegetarianism.

S: Yes. You are not thinking about abstaining from meat all the time just because you're a vegetarian, so if you're a brahmacharya you're not thinking about abstaining from sex all the time - you're just not. Where there's no problem, there's no problem. But one shouldn't lose sight of that very positive side, well it's not 'side', it's the thing itself, and any abstention that results, that is the 'side', or a side.

Bodhisri: Isn't this a rather dangerous example, because it could be a very easy way to escape from a wife and child?

S: Well, I think you're justified in behaving like that before you are Enlightened. I don't think you have to wait until you are Enlightened. I don't think you have to wait; it wouldn't matter then maybe. But certainly there is the question of motivation. I think nowadays that the danger is in the other direction. I think that people are far more likely to try and rationalize attachment than to rationalize what seems to be a selfish detachment. I say the test is whether you try to repeat the same pattern over again. You sometimes hear people say, 'I'm really fed up with worldly life and relationships, etc. etc. and I want to give it all up.' And you say, 'That's fine,' so maybe they [58] do, and after two months they are just doing everything all over again. They just wanted a change of pattern in a neurotic sort of way - well, not a change of pattern: the pattern is the same, but the colours are different, that's all. So that's the test I think. If there's anything suspect in your motive in that sort of way, then sooner or later you'll get back into the same kind of pattern. For instance, if she'd seen Sangamaji sitting at the foot of the tree with some other lads, then she would have been fully justified in complaining and dragging him back home to look after his wife and kid; but since he's sitting there probably trying to gain Enlightenment, which is a higher state, then she hasn't got that right. So he's got the freedom to try and go higher, even though it means leaving, in that sort of way, but not the freedom to give up one act of responsibilities and sort of gaily take on another of the same kind. That wouldn't be right at all. I think that we have to watch that in people saying they are becoming disenchanted with relationships and so on and so forth and not to develop spiritually, when all they want is a change, because maybe they are not working hard enough at that particular situation or relationship. If you've really come to the end of a relationship, or that kind of relationship, then fair enough, but if they just want to experiment round a bit more, well that isn't very good.

Jitari: Do you think it is possibly to come to the end of a relationship?[59]

S: Well, yes and no. I think it's possible to experience a level where one has got nothing to gain from relationships which were not purely spiritual relationships. I think that very definitely.

Dhammadinna: It's summed up in the verse, in a sense: 'He grieves not when she goes.' One can have a relationship with someone but it's not really important if they are there or not.

S: Then maybe the term 'relationship' in that case just isn't applicable.

Chintamani: One is always having relationships.

S: Yes, with all the people, all the time. The Buddha was having relationships with his disciples and everybody who came, probably more than ever.

Jitari: I was thinking of people in the past, for me, who perhaps from time to time I still think of but I don't actually have a relationship with like I have a relationship with people in my life now, but none the less there is still some kind of relationship there. There's something working, even with dead people that's true.

S: Yes, sometimes it's something unfinished. For instance I remember when Kevin's father died he was very upset because he'd never been on good terms with his father. He died suddenly, he had a stroke at work, and Kevin said he felt really upset, not just to lose his father, [60] but because he could never have a positive relationship with his father. The negative relationship just remained where it was, that was that, so he was left with this negative attitude towards his father and he will never be able to put the relationship on any other basis or even start working on it, so he was sort of left with something.

Jitari: Can one resolve that kind of situation in meditation?

S: I'm sure one can, but not by meditation in the very narrow sense, but just as a result of one's whole evolution. Otherwise if you can't, then no Enlightenment is possible. It's the unfinished business, in other words, karma. Karma is unfinished business, things left over from the past that are still holding and binding you. I think that the sort of general rule with regard to personal relationships within the context of the Friends and the Order in general, my overall advice would be to stay put. Stay exactly as you are whatever you happen to be at this moment, and just sort of work on that - as regards relationships. Be working on your meditation and spiritual development, but with regard to relationships, whether it's husband or wife or boyfriend or girlfriend, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, friends, etc. Well, just let it all stay as it is: stay with the ones you have got, including your blood relations. Going off to work out with somebody else that you haven't even met yet maybe, it's something you should be working out with whom it's arisen now, or within oneself. So, stop - don't change. If you're married, okay, [61] that's that, you're married. You got married before you became a Buddhist or before you got Enlightened, but that's the situation, you just stay there. If you're not married, well, stay that way too. If you've got three or four semi-relationships, okay, keep it like that, have three or four good relationships and let the main energy go on one's individual development and meditation and study and so on. If it comes, if someone dies, well yeah, sure, it's broken off, or if they go away, well too bad - you won't grieve. Other relationships will form, at least if no other, other Order members will be ordained and they'll be writing to you saying, 'Hello I've just been ordained, I'm so and so, who are you?'

Break in recording

S: Another sort of Indian big (?). 'Near Gaya, on Gaya's Head'. Gaya is the railway station for Bodh Gaya; it's about twelve miles away - there wasn't a railway station then of course: So the Buddha was staying there, it's a sort of hill called Gaya's Head, Gaya Peak. 'Now on that occasion a great number of ascetics, on the cold winter nights between the eighths...' You have the full-moon day and between full moons you have the dark-moon day and in between each of those you've got the 'eighths' of the lunar month. So, 'between the eighths, in time of snowfall' - I don't quite know what they mean by that. India must have been much colder then because you don't get snow down in the plains now, though it can be very cold. '...were plunging up and down (in the water)' - [62] presumably in the river there - 'sprinkling [themselves with water] and burning sacrifice, thinking: This way comes purity.' This was a very common popular belief in the Buddha's day among Brahmins and ascetics, that you should purify yourself and in that way progress towards Enlightenment or higher spiritual attainments by repeated bathing with holy water, especially on certain days of the month, and burnt sacrifices, burnt offerings. So they were doing this, thinking, 'This way comes purity, [this is the way to become spiritually pure].'

Here the Buddha is gently criticizing popular practice, not exactly criticizing, but pointing beyond it. He says one doesn't become pure by water even though many people bathe here. 'In whom is truth and Dhamma, he is pure and he's a Brahmin.' Again he is paraphrasing the ideal of what he is calling the Brahmin. He's the one who's really pure, and he's pure not by bathing, but because he has realized the truth and the Dhamma. Dhamma in the sense of the higher spiritual principle.

Bodhisattva: Could this be the third fetter?

S: Yes it could be, though it isn't quite that. In the case of the third fetter, it's taking practices that are actually helpful (the ethical observances and the religious observances) but treating them as ends in themselves, not as means to an end. But here it's not even a means; here are some practices which don't even function as means, they are not even helpful in that sense.[63]

Aryamitra: Why does it say, 'tho' many folk bathe here'?

S: It's a popular practice, many people are following it, many people are believing it, but that doesn't make it right, that seems to be the meaning. 'Not by water is one pure.' Even though many people are taking baths here and believe that one becomes pure by water, even though everybody believes it, it isn't true.

There is a sort of touch of rationalism here, one could say, in a way. It's a sort of anti-superstitious attitude, one could say, using that language, even though it's another dangerous sort of language to use.

Jitani: I once read a dictionary definition of Enlightenment which said 'free from superstition'.

S: 'Superstition' of course being defined, sometimes, as almost any religious practice. Meditation would be a superstition. Buddhism itself would be a superstition.

Sutta 1.10

S: This is rather interesting. Supparaka is in western India on the seashore. It was a great port in ancient times. It probably had trade connections with Babylonia. There was a connection between Babylonia, the Sumerian civilization, and the Indus Valley civilization. Supparaka is just south of that Indus Valley region. Supparaka was the place [64] where Bahiya of the Bark Garment was staying, called 'of the Bark Garment' presumably because he wears a garment made of bark. It's not quite clear why he should have been doing that. What is the significance of a bark garment?

Dhammadinna: It sounds rather uncomfortable.

S: I don't think it's that. I think it's probably some kind of fibre.

Chintamani: Palm fibre?

S: It could be, yes. It seems that in the ancient world generally, including even ancient Greece or ancient Egypt, people sometimes avoided wearing animal products, especially those connected with religion, not so much for reasons of non-violence, but for sort of magical reasons. They didn't wear wool. The Egyptian priests didn't wear wool, and they didn't wear skins. They wore cotton if they could get it, though that was very rare, or linen or some kind of bark fibre garment. So it's as though he were some sort of priest or ascetic and he also is living in this place right on the seashore and is called Bahiya. I haven't looked this up. There is a dictionary of Pali proper names, but I haven't got it. That Bahiya, as far as I can tell, is literally 'the outsider, the one from outside', so is he possibly a Sumerian or something like that? [No. transcriber] I can't help wondering this. Also, because in the Sutta Nipata there is a character called [65] Bavari, and Bavari is translated as Babylonian, but I've not been able to find out anything about this, though I do know that there were, in ancient times, connections between western India and Sumeria and Babylonia. It's quite possible, therefore, that here we've got the follower of some Middle Eastern cult, possibly coming even from the Middle Eastern area and living now on the west coast of India, and he is honoured. Of course the way in which he is honoured and respected is described in Buddhistic terms, as though he was a monk, but he isn't a Buddhist monk. He might have been well known as a local soothsayer or some sort of teacher or worshipper of the gods, but anyway, he wondered whether he'd gained the real knowledge and the real Enlightenment. Again, it's put in pre-Buddhistic terms: whether I am an Arhant, which later on had a technical meaning. In early Buddhism it means one who is spiritually worthy, simply, or just worthy even. So we've got a little scene on the west coast of India: there's this man who is called 'the outsider' who is wandering in this area which had connections with Sumeria and Babylonia. He's established himself as a sort of teacher, he's looked up to as maybe a sort of shaman or something of that sort, soothsayer, and he wonders, 'Well have I really arrived, have I really got there, isn't there something beyond, something higher?' We can well imagine this sort of thing happening in those days.

'Then a devata ...' We often have these devatas appearing in the Pali canon, very disconcertingly for the rationalistically-minded reader. They are sometimes tree devatas or house devas, but they [66] appear, and very often they are blood relations of the person to whom they appear, either in that very life or in a previous life, so you get the idea that a devata is someone who was a human being who's just been born in a higher state of existence, can look down on the earth, is still interested in his old friends and relations, and tries to help. So this devata was formerly a blood relation of Bahiya and he knew what was going on in his mind and out of compassion and desire for his welfare he told them, 'No, you're not an

Arhant, not even on the path.' You can take this any way you like. You can either take it literally, maybe he consulted an oracle - that's also possible, that he got a reply from the oracle. All over the ancient world, in those days, 500 BCE, people were consulting oracles. Greece, Middle East, North Africa - oracles all over the place, maybe they had them there. Or maybe the devata spoke to him in a dream or a vision, or some such experience, or he heard a voice, or thought he heard a voice, but somehow the message came to him. 'I'm not Enlightened, I'm not what I'm supposed to be, there's something more'.

Anyway, he acts upon the advice. The devata tells him that there is an Enlightened one living way over to the east in Savatthi, and Bahiya at once sets out. He stays only a single night at each place throughout the journey and he comes to Savatthi.

p.9: 'Comely he was ...' 'He', of course, means the Buddha. It was the Buddha's custom, when he went on his alms tour, collecting food in his bowl, he didn't speak to anybody. Bahiya obviously comes and asks his question at the wrong time. But Bahiya has an answer - why [67] delay? There are more important things, as it were, than just collecting almsfood. There's this whole question of the shortness of life - you may die, if we wait, or I may die. You may die before I have time to ask you again, so therefore he persists, and in the end the Buddha does give his reply nevertheless. There's another title of the Buddha, you notice: the wellfarer, translated, in Pali, Sugata; it means the one well gone, or the happy one, the one gone to a happy state, in this case the state of Nirvana, the good state.

'... the end of ill.' In other words the teaching that the Buddha gives is just pure mindfulness, just be aware. First of all, if you just see something, just see, don't read anything into it, don't project anything on to it, just see what is there. In the same way, just hear, just think, just imagine. If you do this there will be no 'thereby' - in other words there won't be any mental activity explaining anything. Because of this, therefore that; this comes about because of that; on account of that, thereby this, and so on. Because there's no 'thereby', there'll be no 'therein'. I'm not quite sure what is meant by 'therein' here, but there'll be sort of, in a sense, no meaning to it, because you won't be asking about any such thing as meaning, and if you get rid of the idea of 'herein', there's no here, there's no there. These are all conceptual distinctions, and no 'in-between', so when all conceptual activity whatsoever stops then you're in Enlightenment, you are in Nirvana, that's the end of suffering. In other words, what the Buddha is saying is that the way to Enlightenment is sort of not just awareness only, but you could say just the present [68] experience without any sort of interpretation, without any sort of conceptual judgement or evaluation, or anything of that sort. It sounds very easy, but obviously it's very difficult. There's no time. There's no going from this to that; there's therefore no in-between, any here or there. You've just got the experience as it is at that very moment. This is mindfulness only, or pure mindfulness, or even just sitting if you happen to be sitting, or standing or walking as the case may be. There is, of course, great possibility of misunderstanding: the misunderstanding is that you just develop sort of alienated awareness, just looking at everything from the outside, but not experiencing at the same time. It's probably better to think of it in terms of the mirror-like wisdom, the mirror-like knowledge, on the level of Enlightenment or Buddhahood. Just be like a mirror, just reflect, but it doesn't mean reflect without feeling - the mirror suggests something cold and hard, just reflecting, not really feeling, not experiencing, not participating, but it isn't like that. It's also a question of not projecting, not reading into, not misunderstanding, just seeing things as they are, starting even with your own ordinary sense experience. Like when you can sort of listen and you can just hear the wind. You can just sort of stay with that experience or you can start

thinking, 'Oh, it's windy, it might rain later on; I wonder what we shall do if it rains. It'd be a pity if it rained. Oh, that would be really bad. Oh I shall be annoyed: in fact I shall be quite angry, etc.' That's all the mind. You are not staying with the experience itself: it's just wind. So in the heard, let there be only [69] the heard, in the seen only the seen, and in the thought only the thought. If thought is needed, then okay, fair enough, think! If something has to be done, think how to do it, but go straight from A to B, as it were, not sort of wander a long long way. Even imagination is okay (I don't know what Pali word is translated here), but apparently even imagination is okay so long as you are aware of what is happening. You can even sort of fantasize, daydream, but be aware. So that's the teaching he gave him, for which he'd come 1,000 miles or so, on foot, stopping only one night in every place, in his bark garment! I don't think we should imagine him as wearing bits of bark sort of chopped off the tree or peeled off the tree. I'm sure it's fibre. I think he was some sort of shaman - more that sort of fibre, probably from somewhere in the Middle East. He could even have been from Greece for all we know, he was an outsider [sic], and Pythagoras was going to India from Greece about that time, or just before, from Samos.

p. 11 '... and pile a cairn thereon.' The cairn of course is the caitya, stupa. It was a pre-Buddhistic custom to pile a mound of earth or stones over any great man after his death and the Buddha in several places in the scriptures directs this to be done for an Enlightened disciple who has died, e.g. in the case of Sariputta and Moggallana when they died before him, so he does the same thing here with Bahiya. They build a stupa over his remains after cremation. This was the practice for kings and holy men. It is of course a very widespread practice, like the barrows in England. '... a fellow in the Brahma-life has met his end.' Sabrahmacari: 'sa' means 'together with' and 'brahmacari' means [70] 'one who follows the sublime, or spiritual life or career', so sabramacari: a companion or fellow in the spiritual life. It's quite a common Pali word, again connected with brahmacariya. You could translate it 'a fellow celibate', but you see how much of the meaning you miss - or co-celibate, literally.

p. 11 '... he vexed me not in the matter of Dhamma-teaching'. He didn't ask all sorts of questions and have all sorts of difficulties and problems. He just got his teaching, he realized it, and that was that. '... has won utter freedom.' He died an Arhant.

S: Here the Buddha goes a bit further into the ultimate state when he states, 'There's no water there, no earth, no fire, no air, the stars aren't found there, no sun, no moon - it's a completely different dimension. At the same time there's no darkness, it's pure light, it's a spiritual light. So when the sage, the brahmana, by wisdom of his own self - that is personally - 'hath pierced (unto the truth)', then he's freed 'from form', also from no-form. Not only from the rupaloka, from the arupaloka, and free not only from pain, but even from pleasure - there's even a higher state than that and that was the state which Bahiya had reached by the time of his death, as a result of following that teaching or realizing that teaching of the Buddha.

All through this particular chapter the word Brahmin has recurred in different ways, different contexts, different points of view, and the Buddha is trying to use the word Brahmin to express the state, or the stage, that he himself has just realized, or realized at the [71] time of his Enlightenment. I think one can have quite a good general idea or general feel of what the Buddha was getting at, especially from the verses. The prose parts seem to give one an idea more of the background of the whole teaching and the sort of context, the sort of environment, that the Buddha lived and taught in; which couldn't have changed all that much in 100 or 200 years even if the book was compiled a little bit later. So we get quite a vivid

picture of India, religious India, at the time of the Buddha and the sort of teaching that he was originally trying to communicate through these verses - or not even teaching, in a way; very often it was just a sort of communication. He was asked a question, and he responded, and he used the language of the day as best he could, redefining where necessary.

Bodhishri: Isn't it a bit strange that when Bahiya had just learned the teaching of mindfulness that he should be attacked by a calf?

S: You mean he couldn't have been very mindful?

Bodhishri: Yes.

S: Well, I don't know. I suppose the calf could have sort of deliberately galloped up to him and gored him. It must have been quite fierce and he just didn't have time to get away.

Jitari: I'm put in mind of the proverbial bus I've heard you speak about.[72]

S: The bus that somebody might fall under?

Jitari: Yes.

Dhammadinna: It's quite interesting that he was killed after he'd mentioned to the Buddha that life is short.

S: Yes, as though he had a premonition of it.

Buddhadasa: Another interesting point is the obedience of the monks to the Buddha's orders really, the request that he should be burnt and a cairn set up over him.

S: It might not have happened before, this might have been the first time for all we know.

Buddhadasa: It's only after they had completed the duties that the monks thought they could ask why.

S: Yes, very often of course nowadays people ask why first. It's a bit Milarepa-like, when Marpa just tells him to build those houses of this size or that shape, and he just does it.

Though the suttas are quite short, they give quite vivid pictures of the life of those days, the life of the Buddha, and the sort of people he met, and how he lived and what was said, and the sort of [73] teaching that was given and the general sort of air of earnestness and sincerity. I think this comes across very strongly, and the very simple life that they were living mostly out of doors. They've just got little lodgings here, and there's no monasteries. It may be that Bahiya was a sort of seer or soothsayer with some sort of maybe psychic powers or intuition, because how do you explain the devatas? He knew where to go and he apparently knew he hadn't long to live. On that level he might have been quite well-developed. He might have been an astrologer. Babylonia was always rather strong on astrology, the Chaldeans.

Buddhadasa: He also had to ask three times for a teaching.

S: Well, if the Buddha's really convinced that you want to know, and even though it isn't the time, he'll tell you what you want to know. There's this sort of cosmological approach to Nirvana - no earth, no air, no fire, no stars, no sun - you'll get this a bit later on in the Udana.

Chintamani: These suttas are very concise.

S: I get a feeling from it as though there's quite a kinship between ancient India and Ancient Greece, as though the world was much more one in those days. An ancient Greek going to India would be quite at home with all the little shrines, he was quite familiar with [74] those, and teachers and the simple way of life. I got that feeling very strongly reading Heroditus who covers Egypt and Asia Minor and Persia. It was as though it was just one area and almost one civilization, in a way, though there were differences within it. A lot of communication going on over this vast area; people travelling to and fro with Heroditus himself going up as far as southern Russia and down into the Euphrates valley and visiting Babylon. Pythagoras going to India. If we accept the traditional date, the Buddha was an exact contemporary to within a year or two to Darius the Great, so that means that the Persian invasion of Greece was in the next generation after that. The Persians invaded Greece at practically the same time that the Magadha Empire invaded the Sakya territory.

Chintamani: What period of art was that in Greece?

S: Archaic. With Classical Greece the rot sets in. There's a trace of the Egyptian influence in the Archaic.

Jitari: Archaic is a word that has come up quite a few times today.

S: The language here is archaic - in terms of Pali. I also think it is very much the same sort of world that we encounter in the earlier Upanishads. You don't have the long discourses that you get in some of the later Buddhist texts, even of the Pali canon. You've got short [75] sections, you've got just verses, sayings, little incidents, but they build up to a very vivid overall picture. Even geographically, you can get your bearings. You are definitely dealing in history, you're not dealing with a mythological figure. You are in northern India, mainly north-eastern India; places are mentioned again and again; Gaya is mentioned, Uruvela is mentioned, Savatthi is mentioned (which is more sort of north-west) and Supparaka is mentioned, right on the western coast. That's the area that Buddhism extended to during the lifetime of the Buddha, not beyond that as far as we know. Cities are mentioned: Savatthi and Rajagaha are big cities, and then there are villages and forests in between, little patches of cultivation around the villages with people going to and fro and ascetics and monks travelling around, coming to see the Buddha; the Buddha himself travelling around and going and begging his food every day; monks living in simple lodgings on the outskirts of the towns or in the woods even; some living alone, some living in little groups and all in sort of contact. So it's quite a vivid picture. You feel that there's a real historical scene, a real historical period.

Chintamani: What was happening in Britain at that time?

S: I don't know. 500 BCE? Invading Jutes I think and the later waves of Celtic invasion. I'm afraid Britain was rather out of the picture.

There seem to be two things basically, or two poles: there's the Buddha's Enlightenment experience (we very definitely start with that, [76] the first three or four episodes are centred on the Buddha's Enlightenment) and there's the attempt to define Enlightenment in terms of the Brahmin ideal redefined - to sort of use the whole ideal or idea of Brahminhood as a means of communicating to people what the Buddha was talking about when he spoke of Enlightenment. Let's take an example, suppose there was no such thing as Buddhism around at the moment and no one knew anything about it and there was only Christianity of a rather limited kind, and suppose someone did experience Enlightenment and wanted to find some word, or term, or image that would communicate that, from the existing cultural heritage; which one would he use? Which one would he think was the nearest and try to sort of improve on it and update it, upgrade it. He might talk in terms of Super Christhood or something like that, and maybe even if he did that, some people would start misunderstanding and try to sort of restore the original meaning after a while, of Christhood in the narrow Christian sense, and forget the meaning that he tried to give to the word, to communicate. It isn't easy to communicate a new idea, or a new experience, or a new feeling using the old words. Sometimes the words get the better of you and sort of reassert their original meaning.

We are left with this picture of the Buddha having this tremendous experience in the India of 500 BCE and all that that meant, just trying to communicate it in the best way he could. That was the starting point of everything.

Aryamitra: The point that surprised me a bit in this chapter was that Kassapa did [77] not accept the food from the devas, because I would have thought that he would.

S: Especially as he was sick; he had a perfect excuse.

Aryamitra: I also thought it wasn't harmful - why not?

Buddhadasa: It was a demonstration of skilful means, in fact.

S: Yes, he was doing his thing, setting his particular kind of example. No doubt it was good that in the Buddha's order there should have been at least one perfect ascetic.

Buddhadasa: Also the Buddha is not pointing to himself as an example but saying there are the examples all around.

S: Yes, the Buddha praises the disciples. Once I did think of using the term Archaic Buddhism for this phase, the very early phase.

Buddhadasa: It's a very attractive phrase, everything was very free and the Buddha was entirely approachable.

S: The background is much more vivid than the background of Hui Neng, it's much more full, more concrete, which is quite interesting.

Chintamani: Do you think a lot has to do with the different temperament of the [78] Chinese and the Indians?

S: Well, it should have been the other way around, that the Indians are sort of abstract,

metaphysical, etc. etc., up in the air; the Chinese are down-to-earth, concrete, practical, vivid, poetic. But here is this work of Indian origin and it's very concrete. There's lots of historical, and geographical, and anthropological information in just a few pages. It's very rich. The spiritual teaching is there, but it's in a very definite historical context, which is fully realized, whereas the context of Hui Neng is a bit vague. There is the reference to the monks in the monastery and the scholars and officials who are in the audience, but there's not much more than that. You don't get the living impression of a whole society, a whole civilization, that you do get from this, even these few pages.

Chintamani: Perhaps Chinese society was much more complicated, there was much more to leave out.

S: Maybe.

Chintamani: Big cities. Were there big cities at this time?

S: Oh, yes. Rajagaha and Savatthi were big cities with at least hundreds of thousands of inhabitants.[79]

Bodhishri: Are the verses in a certain order of importance? Because they all tell about the same thing, but in different ways.

S: There does seem to be a certain sequence, it's not just haphazard. It might be a good idea later on to just read the verses through one after another and see what impression one gets just from them.

Bodhishri: The one with the water (ix) seemed less important to me than the ones at the beginning.

S: Well, in the Indian context it's very important, because people were doing things like that all the time. They're still dipping in the Ganges. The Ganges is still the holy river and it purifies them - it still goes on.

Aryamitra: Can you think of a parallel situation here?

S: Going to church.

Day 2

Chapter 2: Mucalinda

Sutta 2.1

S: I've gone into the Mucalinda episode in my lecture 'Archetypal Symbols in the Biography of the Buddha' and also in 'The Three Jewels', where I think I drew from the Vinaya account which is much more detailed. [80] [The account in The Three Jewels was read out in its entirety from bottom of p. 32 [1977 edition] 'Also connected ... as the instrument of the Enlightened Mind.' top of p. 34.]

So that's the general significance of this Mucalinda episode and Mucalinda symbolism. I've said much the same thing in the lecture, maybe in a more detailed manner. This is how we can understand the Mucalinda episode, and then we have the verse uttered by the Buddha, which is not inappropriate to the occasion, he could well have spoken to Mucalinda in that way. On the other hand it doesn't have any particular connection, he could just have spoken the verse to someone else.

'Happy his solitude who glad at heart
Hath dhamma learned and doth the vision see!'

Vision of course here refers to the vision of reality, the perfect vision which culminates in Enlightenment itself.

'Happy is that benignity towards the world'; benignity obviously refers to metta. 'Benignity' is not bad, but metta is not fully represented by it. So, happy is that state of metta, that feeling of metta, towards the world, which doesn't work harm on any being. 'Happy the freedom from all lust': from all neurotic craving and desire. '...the ascent past and beyond the needs of sense-desires.' It's not that they are held down or restrained, there's no need for them any more, because one has a greater happiness. 'He who doth crush the great 'I' conceit': who doesn't experience himself as an individual to the exclusion of other individuals, as it were, who can experience, who can feel or see, that they are just as much alive as he is, 'This, [81] even this, is happiness supreme.' The Buddha, here, seems to be simply giving a quite spontaneous expression of his own state of happiness and bliss and saying what it arises out of; that it arises out of being alone, of having learned the Dhamma (not Dhamma in the sense of a doctrinal system, but in the sense of the spiritual law governing the whole universe and leading to the vision). He's happy because he's full of metta towards all living beings, he's happy because he has no neurotic desires, he doesn't need any sense satisfaction, and above all, he doesn't think any more that 'I am I'; he's gone beyond that. That doesn't mean that the sense of 'I' is annihilated in a functional sort of sense, but it's no longer overvalued. It's not as though there is a blank instead of where you were before. There's the physical body - that's still there - there's the mind working, but they are not at the centre any more. It's as though one's vision had overlapped a wider dimension of which your empirical self is just one very small part of reflection, so your consciousness is no longer identified with 'you'. The 'you' is still there, but you are equally identified with all the other 'yous', which are also 'Is'; they are not, in a sense, 'yous' any more. It's more like that.

Chintamani: What about the chakras? Some people say it's just a symbolic representation and others say that there are actually centres within this body at those particular points.

S: I remember raising this question with my friend Mr Chen and he said, 'Ah! there are three kinds of centres, there are three sets of seven.' [82] He said that there are physical centres, which are known to physiology. I don't remember the names of all of them. There are ganglia. For instance, there's the solar plexus, which obviously corresponds to the centre just here, and so on, all the way up and all the way down. There are the gross physical chakras, which he said do exist and energies are associated there and they have their place in the general nervous system, and all that. Then he said there are all the subtle centres corresponding to these physical ones.

Chintamani: Located in the body?

S: No, they are not located IN the body because they are subtle, they are not material, but corresponding to. Then he said there are the wisdom centres, which are even higher. According to his explanation, when one meditated on the drawing of the energy up from lower to higher centres, one was really concentrating on the second set of centres, the psychic centres, the subtle centres; but as a basis for concentration, there's no harm if one fixes one's attention on the corresponding physical centre, but actually that's just a support for activating the psychic centre to which it corresponds.

Aryamitra: Do they have some relation? Could one say that the psychic one would be almost a transformation of the physical one?

S: Yes, one can say that, certainly. This is why I say that they correspond. It's not that the subtle heart centre is in the body in some [83] position connected with the heart - it's on a different plane. It corresponds to the physical heart centre in the same sort of way that the mind itself corresponds to the body, but you can't really say that the mind is in the body, though we often speak like that, but it doesn't stand up to analysis. The wisdom chakras are in quite another dimension, one can't really say anything about those. They correspond roughly to the wisdom or prajna level, the perfect vision level, whereas the psychic centres, the subtle centres, correspond to the meditation level; and the physical centres to the physical body level. Even supposing you ignore the physical body and you understand completely well that the second set of chakras are non-physical, and you concentrate on those, and you don't even use the physical centres as a support for concentrating on the psychic centres, by virtue of your activating the psychic centres, there'll be some repercussions in the physical body on the physical centres.

Aryamitra: Like the stupa visualization.

S: Right, yes. Sometimes you may not be quite sure where you are. You might even be half way between, they are not things, which are separate and discrete. You might be sort of in between and the physical centre might be a bit activated, something seems to be stirring, at the same time perhaps the corresponding psychic centre is beginning to be activated too. You may be sort of experiencing them both together, not quite able to sort them out, but it's essentially the second one [84] that you are trying to develop when you do anything that comes under the heading, roughly, of kundalini yoga. But the fact that you've got something happening in the physical centres, doesn't necessarily mean that you are practising kundalini yoga just by itself, because sometimes you get sensations and bubblings and things in the physical centres quite spontaneously as a result of maybe purely biological factors, physiological factors. This is a subject in which one of the Friends, some Order member or other, ought to do some systematic investigation, sooner or later: the physiological nervous system and centres and the psychical ones; preferably someone with medical knowledge and background. We don't have any physician in the movement. It would be quite useful if we did have, because sometimes someone with precise knowledge of this sort can explode with a few timely words quite fanciful ideas. I had a friend in Bombay, Dr Mehta, who was very good in this way. He was a quite experienced yogi and he had also had a medical training and had studied quite a lot on his own different obscure branches of medicine and it was very useful sometimes to talk to him about these things. In Mr Chen's case, he used to go entirely by tradition and his own experience, and sometimes he had ideas which were quite fantastic from a modern medical point of view. You could see the point of them from a spiritual point of view, but sometimes they were quite indefensible in a strict scientific sense, like

Buddhaghosa's account of the digestive system, for instance, which is wonderful for practice provided you don't know anything about the digestive system! I had a doctor friend staying with me in Kalimpong [85] who took to Buddhism and he was really irritated by Buddhaghosa's account of the digestive system. Once he sort of flung the Visuddhimagga down in disgust; he said, 'I can't stand this kind of rubbish,' but he agreed afterwards that the moral was excellent; the reason why Buddhaghosa was describing the digestive system. It was all in connection with the repulsiveness of food, and he was explaining what happens to food just to put you off. It was a really vivid and repulsive description, but he got quite a lot of his facts wrong. This friend of mine pointed out that you could draw just as good a moral with a correct account of the digestive process; but he couldn't agree that it was loathsome and disgusting. He said it was absolutely fascinating and beautiful and wonderful.

Of course this also suggests, if you've got those different sets of centres, that you've got a physical body, as it were a physical mental-cum-emotional body, and a sort of wisdom body which is your kaya when you are Enlightened, your Buddhakaya.

Dhammadinna: Would that correspond to a sort of astral body?

S: I suppose the etheric or astral bodies would represent the sort of lower portion of the second. I think when you try and sort of work out parallels and correspondences, as between different systems and nomenclature, it's very difficult. You can go back to the old Greek classification of body, soul, and spirit - so, psyche and nous, except that you would have to enlarge the meaning of nous to include prajna or wisdom.[86]

Chintamani: This relates presumably to the trikaya?

S: No. Well, in a way. But even within Buddhism itself you have to be very careful how you work out your correspondences. I think that what is important to understand is that when we are doing any form of what is generally called kundalini yoga, we are operating on the psychical level (for want of a better term). I don't mean psychical in the College of Psychic Science sense, but psychical in the sense of the mental cum emotional. I'd use the word mental, except that mental is usually opposed to emotional, whereas psychical in the original sense covers all of that.

Chintamani: So is the stupa practice a kundalini practice?

S: Which one are you referring to?

Chintamani: Building it up within the body.

S: Sort of. You mean where you start with the blocked energy and it starts moving from side to side; that one you mean?

Chintamani: No, building the cube here etc. [pointing to different parts of the body]

S: Well, it depends; it could activate only physical centres, on the other hand it could activate psychic centres.[87]

Bodhishri: Can you do the stupa meditation inside the body?

S: Yes, that is one way of doing it. There are many variants on the stupa and five or six element practice. Subhuti has written about this in his letter - whether the five element practice ('this is not mine' type) can be done generally, but I'm going to say no, because if it's treated as a sort of psychological exercise (and you can't help treating it in that way unless you're spiritually committed), it can just have a disintegrating sort of effect on you and destroy your sense of individuality, so I only want it to be practised within the Order.

Dhammadinna: Do you think the stupa practice should be done generally, just the visualization?

S: Just the visualization, as a visualization exercise to help concentration, is all right.

Sutta 2.2

S: 'Anathapindika' - anatha means one without a lord, without a master (natha means lord, master), i.e. an orphan, a destitute person, no one to look after him. Pinda is food, especially balls of rice (pinda is literally a ball). So Anathapindika is the one who gives food to the poor and to the orphans; his personal name was Sudatta.

Buddhadasa: Is that the name that was given to him by the Buddha?[88]

S: No, Sudatta was his original birth name which wasn't generally known, so you remember in the episode where he first meets the Buddha, the Buddha addresses him as Sudatta and he is really amazed because that name isn't in general circulation, nobody knows it. He was generally known just as Anathapindika.

Buddhadasa: Is the Jeta Grove still in existence?

S: Well the site is there, and it's been partially excavated, and one of my friends, Bhikkhu Sangharatana, is now living there; he moved in about five or six years ago, and he's trying to revive the whole area as a pilgrimage centre and Buddhist centre and on.

You see things are developing: there's a service-hall, I think it's dhammasala, it's a sort of large hall. You find these on the outskirts of villages even now in India, especially in Maharashtra. The untouchables, for instance, had their own. They are sort of large structures; they are mainly just a roof, sometimes not even walls, and sometimes they are very roughly just walled in, sometimes wattle and daub, but they are quite large and village people can sometimes meet there for their village meetings and discussions and wandering ascetics are put up there and they can stay there and sleep there and people can come and visit them there. These are quite common, and it's something of that sort. It's not a service hall in the sense that they were holding regular Salvation Army type services or anything like that, or even high church services. It was just a large, almost barn-like structure. Sometimes the village folk would store things there during the winter.[89]

Aryamitra: Would they have schools like that?

S: Yes, sometimes schools even were like that. The local Brahmin or the local bhikkhu would sort of be there for a couple of hours or four or five hours each day and the local lads would gather around and they'd be taught. It's a sort of all-purpose village hall type of thing which

any wandering ascetic could use. It wasn't usually of any particular sect, though sometimes halls and residences were donated for a particular teacher and his disciples. This happened in the case of the Buddha, but very often the village hall was open to everybody, anyone could just stay there.

'... or Pasenadi the Kosalan?' North-eastern and western India at that time was practically divided between two great kingdoms. The kingdom of Magadha roughly corresponded to Bihar and the kingdom of Kosala to the United Provinces, or Uttar Pradesh as it's called now. There is the Gangetic basin, the Gangetic plain, running from south-eastern up to north-western India, in the upper half of India. If you imagine a sort of oblong right in the middle of that slightly tilted, then one half of the oblong is Magadha which falls several hundred miles short of Calcutta and Kosala, up towards Delhi, what is now the grand trunk railway, that sort of route - the Calcutta-Delhi axis.

There were these two kingdoms and both these kings were very devoted followers of the Buddha, especially Bimbisara. Magadha especially was expanding, and at the end of the Buddha's lifetime it swallowed up the Sakya republic and during his lifetime, even earlier, it was sort of [90] slowly absorbing all the small independent republics and tribes in the area. It has been said that this was the basic political situation in India at the Buddha's time, during the Buddha's whole life, that these two great empires or kingdoms were sort of somewhat in competition, and Magadha especially was absorbing more and more territory and of course two or three centuries later it was the great Magadhan empire of Asoka, which was one of the biggest empires India has ever seen, extending right up into Afghanistan and extending right down into South India, practically to the tip. That was maybe four generations later. You can imagine then that the monks were also aware of these developments and they were aware of these two great kingdoms, aware that there was a certain amount of competition, aware that they were expanding (or at least that one of them was expanding) rapidly. In fact both were; Kosala conquered the city and state of Benares, for instance, and absorbed it. Even the monks were quite interested in all this and were talking about which state was the bigger and more powerful, and which king was going to swallow up the other; so they were talking in this sort of way, apparently, on this occasion.

'This chance talk was unfinished when the Exalted One, rising from his solitude at eventide, came to the service-hall and on getting there sat down on a seat made ready.' You realize what this means? Usually the monks used to go out at about nine o'clock in the morning on their almsrounds because don't forget you've got to wait for the householder to cook it! It isn't all ready, and usually food isn't left overnight because it's so hot, and in any case, you wouldn't like to give stale food to a monk who came to the door, no. Usually lay people, especially in those agricultural days, had a good meal before [91] they went out to work in the fields. So the monk had to get in his almsround usually at that time when they'd just cooked but hadn't yet eaten and gone out to work for the day. So usually it meant about 9 o'clock, though sometimes monks went twice, once very early (they do this in Burma, for instance, nowadays) and once later on in the morning. The monks in any case had to finish eating by twelve o'clock, according to the rule a monk shouldn't eat anything after twelve o'clock.

Chintamani: Why? What is the reason for that?

S: There's a long history behind it, but the basic reason is he should restrain his appetites. This is still a fairly general rule in South-East Asia, and even some Tibetan monks observe it,

though only the older strict ones. I myself followed this quite strictly, I think for about twelve or fifteen years, and it is quite surprising how used you can get to it. You just don't think about food after twelve o'clock and you don't seem to feel the lack of it. You seem to be just as energetic as everyone else, it's quite strange.

Aryamitra: Perhaps even more.

S: Maybe. Of course quite a few monks, especially young sturdy monks, have two good meals before twelve o'clock, and some even get in three, which is technically okay, though rather against the spirit of the rule; [92] but most monks (as far as my own experience goes, and this was my practice too) have a decent breakfast and a quite good early lunch. I'm told though by doctors and medical men that this is quite bad. It's not a good system that you should just get all your eating in before twelve o'clock. They say it would be much better to eat only at night (as the Sufis for instance), only after dark; or just take one meal in the morning and one meal in the evening. This is what medical men say, but anyway the traditional Buddhist practice is to finish before twelve and then nothing else. Now, again there are (well, you know what human nature is like) very strict monks who take nothing at all, only liquids, which usually doesn't include fruit juices. The modern practice is that very strict monks take only tea without milk or sugar; less strict monks put milk in their tea (and I must confess I used to put milk in my tea, sometimes anyway). Monks who are considered by their fellow monks rather shameless take even a glass of milk, which is rather beyond the pale. Very modern monks - they usually make their health the excuse - take a cup of Horlicks or Ovaltine, nowadays, and a few monks take vitamin tablets. But there are one or two traditional exceptions (I don't know how this arose), there's a certain green stuff which is supposed not to be included and which is taken in Thailand by the monks; and there's a certain seed (I think it's sesamum seed) which can be taken for some reason or other, it's a traditional exception. It's crept in, even in the Theravada countries, but that isn't very much. Then there's medicine food. If you are not too well, or are sick, or in need of nourishment [93] you are allowed to take, after twelve o'clock, a mixture of honey, butter, molasses, sugar, candy, and oil; these five things. I myself have had this, just once, to see what it was like. It's all mixed together in a bowl and obviously is it a highly nutritious thing. So if a monk is sick or weak he's permitted to take this. This is called medicinal food. Some monks regularly take it - again, human nature! - as a preventative measure, but not very many.

The point that I'm getting at is that all these monks would have finished their food by twelve o'clock and then they started talking on this particular topic, and "this chance talk was unfinished when the Exalted One, rising from his solitude at eventide" - maybe six or seven o'clock in the evening. So they'd been talking for five or six hours on this one topic.

"Bimbisara?" It means a sort of fruit juice. Bimba is a sort of fruit and sara is juice. I don't know how he got that name. [Bimbi means gold, so Bimbisara can mean "of a golden colour". But according to Tibetan sources, Bimbi was the name of his mother, and his name was derived from hers (Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha*, 16), tr.] The verse seems a little inconsequential here. One wonders whether it's just a question of tacking a particular verse on to a particular story, but the story itself seems to have the ring of authenticity and you can quite imagine the Buddha rebuking the monks in this sort of way. If I recollect rightly, this episode occurs more than once in the canon. [cf. e.g. *Anguttara Nikaya* x.69: *Kathavatthu Sutta*, tr.] The monks gather together and instead of talking about the Dharma they engage in talk about various other things.

Aryamitra: It's like talking about politics.

S: I think also, I assume that the Buddha was not saying that there [94] shouldn't ever under any circumstances be a reference to anything political, but the monks had been talking of nothing else for five or six or seven hours, which suggests they were rather obsessed with the matter. Supposing they'd just discussed it for ten or fifteen minutes or even half an hour and then they'd turned to other things; it's very unlikely that the Buddha would have rebuked them in that way, but it seems as though their minds were carried away by that discussion. They got really involved and they lost their mindfulness and got thoroughly absorbed in it and forgot about all their spiritual life and the Dhamma and why they'd become monks, and so on and so forth, and presumably it was this that the Buddha was getting at. Therefore he says when you come together in conclave (which seems to be a rather ceremonious word), when you meet, 'either talk in accordance with Dhamma (Dhamma-katha) or the Ariyan silence', which is not just keeping quiet but is silence because the mind is absorbed at a higher level, a sort of meditative level.

Then the verse itself, 'The bliss of lusts and heaven-world equal not one sixteenth of the bliss of craving's ending.' Perhaps that is suggested by the reference to the two kings. They are supposed to have everything: land, property, money, chariots, soldiers, women, all sorts of pleasures, but however happy they are, even however happy the gods are, all that put together doesn't amount to one sixteenth of the happiness you experience by getting rid of all neurotic desire, all craving.[95]

Chintamani: The fact that the monks had become so preoccupied with them meant that there were presumably some bits of them still preoccupied with all these wonderful things and that by indulging in talking about them, they could, if not have the things, imagine them, fantasize.

S: Yes.

Aryamitra: They were specifically talking about which is the richest, which is the most powerful, rather than the political situation.

S: I think one of the points that arises here is that it's very easy to get carried away in talk and to lose mindfulness. I think people find this quite often. I wonder what happens when one gets carried away, when one isn't just discussing objectively, calmly, and mindfully. One is carried away by something one is talking about - especially something of this sort. One can tell immediately when the tone or mood of the discussion or conversation changes. It's as though something had been clicked on, there's something else functioning when you're really involved or carried away, which is different from being really interested or concerned. Maybe you just identify with something emotionally, which means in a way you sort of project. It's not you discussing, something else has taken over, some factor within you that you are not fully conscious of has come up and is getting its satisfaction. You are a bit possessed. You are not fully in control of yourself. You've allowed yourself to be sort of taken over by a part of yourself that you are not fully conscious of. This is what happens. [96] Presumably this could happen when you are ostensibly discussing religion.

Chintamani: It's one of the easiest ways of experiencing energy - you get tired after a while.

S: Yes. I think this is one of the ways in which one can know what has been happening - you feel sort of worn out at the end. You don't feel stimulated. You feel a sort of unease or dis-ease, a sort of disquietude. You don't feel satisfied as though you've expressed yourself and said something. You feel vaguely disturbed, or unhappy. Even if you are rather pleased or jubilant about the discussion, you are not really happy.

Aryamitra: Quite often you find that you're not really communicating, you're not listening to other people, but just waiting for them to stop speaking so that you can say what you have to say.

S: Though I think more often there's a sort of confluence and you find something that you all agree about or two or three of you agree about and you really let yourselves go on that particular topic, even if it's only grumbling about the weather. It's a very low level of communication, if it is in fact communication at all.

Sutta 2.3

S: The verse: in other words, do as you would be done by. It's quite a [97] simple, though at the same time quite profound, sort of ethical reflection. We don't like things being done to us, but we don't realize with equal vividness that other people don't like things being done to them either. It's a question of putting oneself in the other person's place.

Aryamitra: 'When for the self hereafter he seeks happiness.' Is there any connection here with karma in that if you have been mistreating other people or other creatures, that in, say, meditation or when you are wanting to progress yourself, that's when you will feel the consequences?

S: There's that, though it would also seem in some cases, in even the ordinary circumstances of life, that if you've sort of behaved in the way the boys behaved to the snake, it's almost as though you expose yourself to unpleasant influences later on. It's as though you sort of put yourself on a wavelength that attracts trouble. It's as though these aggressive vibrations are going out from you and someone who wants to pick up on those, does so, and in that way you tend to attract trouble.

Aryamitra: An experience I've had with taking other people's yoga classes is that I've noticed that the type of people coming along seem to be that type, or that aspect of themselves was coming out. I noticed this specifically with Subhuti's first study group. The psychological [98] type of person seemed to be similar to Subhuti himself, or [else] it was the fact that Subhuti was stimulating that side of them, I don't know.

S: Presumably they didn't know that Subhuti was taking it in some cases and they didn't even know who Subhuti was, it was just a name. It's more as though (if in fact this does happen) you stimulate in others that side of you which is in fact uppermost, in those sort of conditions, in that sort of situation.

Aryamitra: I noticed this particularly when I took the yoga class of someone who teaches with a great deal of flair, in a camp sort of way. I took his class while he was away once, and all the people in the class were very much like that. They were exactly the same. I couldn't help but laugh. I expect it's just stimulated.

S: I think it's not only stimulation; it's also imitation. You tend to imitate the sort of admired figure in front. You model yourself on him. You sort of want to be like him, so sometimes you imitate quite superficial things instead of really learning and really becoming like him. You take on his mannerisms rather than becoming like him. I think there's a bit of that too, quite a bit.

Jitari: This happens within the Order. Various people take on mannerisms that you yourself have.[99]

S: It's a question of a distinction between what is really learned and absorbed and assimilated, and what is - as it were - merely taken on, which can be just a...

[Break in recording]

Jitari: I've also noticed this not just with yourself, but other Order members taking on aspects of other Order members. It's as if we each rub off a little on everybody else.

S: We see this also in the centres outside London. For instance, now that Vajradaka is leading the Glasgow group there are several people who apparently just haven't come any more, who apparently are not attracted to Vajradaka and his way of doing things, and of course other people are.

Aryamitra: I wonder if this is another reason why, say, in a class that someone has taken for some time, when you've got a flux of people coming and going, the people that are left are the people that are attracted to the person taking the class.

S: That is one factor, I'm sure.

Dhammadinna: In some ways it's quite a probable.

S: We noticed this in connection with Gunar Roth, because he's got a very strong personality, and Vajrabodhi mentioned in a letter that a lot of [100] the people who were attracted by him in Finland would have been attracted by him whether he was teaching Buddhism or anything else - it wouldn't matter. He could teach anything and they'd still be attracted because it was him. Of course, if he's really trying to teach Buddhism, this can be very frustrating because you feel that you haven't succeeded in teaching it at all, you've only got some personal followers, which is quite another matter.

Bodhishri: We also lost two of our Friends when you came to Finland! Day had been coming for half a year or so, but we never saw dem after dat.

S: I must have really put them off.

Chintamani: You can't please all of the people all of the time.

S: Well, no you can't. You shouldn't even be disappointed when you can't. The Buddha couldn't. He couldn't keep Devadatta happy anyway, and there were lots of Brahmins who talked to the Buddha and went away. They weren't impressed at all - he wasn't the real thing, so what could the Buddha do about it?

Buddhadasa: It's probably an indication that you are beginning to get somewhere when you see a variety of people are beginning to be attracted rather than one type of person.[101]

S: This is why it is good, or would be good, if we could have within the Order a variety of people and a variety of approaches almost, though without confining newcomers. Sort of different wings of the Order, or of the activities at least.

Dhammadinna: I think that's beginning to happen, I think we are beginning to become more individual.

Buddhadasa: That's almost without a doubt, but it does create problems because people are looking, or the Friends are looking, for an Order with an identity, and it does not appear to be there. We can recognize the identity within ourselves, but when Order members aren't seen to behave as Order members ought to be behaving, that's quite difficult for the Friends sometimes.

S: This is a different thing. It's not just their particular style, it's just failure to reach up to a certain level, and that's quite different.

Chintamani: But it's also newcomers' preconceived ideas about spiritual things.

S: But then Order members must understand that newcomers are newcomers. They are not expected to have your understanding. Order members must be very careful not to react against the newcomers and their admittedly wrong ideas and projections. Just say, 'All right they are [102] there, I've got to accept this for the time being, just because I am an Order member, it's an avoidable thing, but I should function in such a way that this is dissolved eventually.' Not at once, in a very reactive way, trying to reject what you think they are trying to put on to you, or lay on to you and say, 'I'm not going to have that!' That's just no good at all, that is merely reactive.

It's a question of tuning in, and if you are on a certain wavelength, you will tend to attract people who are on that wavelength or to be drawn to or involved with people on that wavelength, whether in a positive or a negative manner. If you are on a sort of wavelength of violence you will attract violence, you'll be drawn to violence. You need not even be on that wavelength of violence very consciously. It can be felt, it can be picked up by others, and whether you like it or not you'll always be getting into trouble. It can be something that's sort of repressed in you, but it's there. We know that there are people like this who always seem to be getting into trouble. It doesn't happen to other people, but it always happens to them for no apparent reason.

Dhammadinna: I went through a period like this myself - not so much violence - I went through a period of feeling very afraid all the time and I just attracted more and more unpleasant experiences, and eventually I realized that it was just coming from me.

S: It's as though you are sending out signals: 'Please come and do this to me.'[103]

Dhammadinna: Yes it really did feel like that after a while, and I realized that as lots of people homed in on me and were unpleasant to me.

S: I saw a cartoon once illustrating this. A man was going around allegedly with a placard pinned on to his back: 'Please kick me.' This is the sort of 'vibe' that some people send out, 'Please kick me.' Of course, sometimes they overtly express it and say, 'oh, please don't kick me,' but the message that gets through is 'kick me.' It may be that it was something like this that the Buddha was getting at. If you are harming other living beings, that sort of ill will is there, subsequently. Even though you want happiness for yourself, you're sending out signals of ill will which others will pick up on and home in on.

Sutta 2.4

S: The verse: in other words he said, 'It's your fault!' Though from a rather different point of view from the point of view of the previous set of verses. The situation seems reasonably familiar. This sort of inter-religious jealousy, as it were. The Buddha and his disciples being well-regarded and supplied with everything, and the wanderers of other views (that is, those who were not followers of the Buddha) not getting very much, and they started becoming rather upset, jealous, and even abused the Buddha and his followers. 'Wanderer' is parivrajaka or pabbajaka. A wanderer is someone who has left home and is just wandering around, living on the charity of the public, [104] either following a teaching or looking for one, following a master or looking for one. Of course, there were swarms of them going around in the India of the Buddha's day. No one really knows why this suddenly happened. It was a new phenomenon. Rhys Davids discusses it in his (?) book, but very good book, Buddhist India. They weren't all purely spiritual seekers; some were just wandering around. They got fed up apparently with settled urban - or even village - life, and they just left home and wandered about, just like those modern sadhus do. It wasn't just a purely spiritual aspiration in all cases, it must have been a sort of wanderlust and footlooseness and so on; but it seems as though, just at about the time of the Buddha, or just before, there was an outburst of this in northern India. Maybe it was a manifestation of prosperity. That whole Gangetic valley was pretty well settled and the little villages were established. There were quite a few prosperous and flourishing cities, plenty of food and fairly secure living conditions, and there was quite a bit of surplus and people could afford to support the nonproductive wanderers. Maybe there was a socio-economic explanation for it, but it's only in India. We don't seem to find this sort of thing happening in the Middle East, in the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates with the Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations. They don't seem to have developed in this way at all, but in India it did develop. You had these parivrajakas wandering around and a very few of them wandered with their families, though there weren't many of this kind (we'll encounter one such group later on in the Udana), but the majority seem to have had some [105] religious and spiritual interest, and the majority of the Buddha's more serious followers were recruited from this particular class. Some, we can say, were spiritual seekers, others were more or less sort of gypsies or nomads.

Chintamani: They say that gypsies originated in India.

S: I think that's fairly established, because their language is definitely connected with Sanskrit. I was looking up the other day the word 'pal' which comes from the Sanskrit bratra(?) which means friend or brother. Romany is quite definitely of Sanskrit origin.

'In village or forest, touched by weal or woe, Ascribe it not to self or to another.' The monks have been rather upset apparently by this abuse coming from the other wanderers, so they've suffered. The Buddha is saying, 'okay, you've suffered, but why have you suffered? Don't

think that you've suffered on account of other people. Don't even think that you've suffered because of your own fault. All that has happened is that because you've got a body, a body base, the suffering has arisen. You've taken the body, so suffering is impinging on that body, that's what's happening.' This is exactly what Santideva says in the Bodhicaryavatara: The enemy has taken the stick, but you've taken the body. It's true that there wouldn't be any suffering if he hadn't taken the stick to you, but there wouldn't have been any suffering either if you hadn't taken the body to him. If you didn't have a body, there wouldn't be any suffering, so you can't say that it's his fault, it's more your fault, [106] though in a sense it isn't even your fault. It's because there is a body there that suffering is arising. Don't think in terms of him and you and 'he's doing this to me'. There's a body, a stick comes into contact with it, therefore suffering arises. Just look at it like that. So the same thing is said here: Why get upset because of the abuse? You've insisted on having bodies and being reborn again, and those bodies have got ears and those ears hear, and so therefore suffering arises. That's all that's happening, just see the situation, don't get all upset. There's quite a definite resemblance between this verse and the verse in the Bodhicaryavatara. The substance of the verse in the Bodhicaryavatara is: why get angry with the enemy who beats you? It is true he has taken the stick to you, but you've taken the body. If you hadn't taken the body you wouldn't suffer, just as you wouldn't suffer if he hadn't taken the stick; but body and stick together both produce the suffering. He provides the stick, you provide the body, you are both responsible. It's wonderfully logical. Of course it assumes (as Buddhism generally assumes) that you've taken the body, as it were, on account of your desire for one; or you've gravitated towards a body, that your psyche was of such a nature before rebirth that it wanted to be embodied. It was seeking after physical experience, sensuous impressions, well, now you've got them, but they include things like sticks and unpleasant words, so you've got what you wanted. You insisted on having a body, you knew quite well it would be provided with sense organs. That's what you wanted so that you could experience all the pleasant sounds and experience [107] all the pleasant sensations, but the same body that can experience pleasure can also experience pain. You can't separate them, you can't have the one without the other. In fact the more exquisitely(?) sensitive you are, and the subtler the pleasures that you can appreciate, the subtler the pains that you can experience too! If you've a coarse, insensitive soul, well, maybe you don't experience all those ecstatic pleasures, but you don't suffer very much either.

The only refuge from this is a spiritual dimension, where this sort of state doesn't obtain. Where these conditions don't exist. If I don't want the pain and the suffering then I've got to give up the sensuous pleasure etc. too. I've either got to be ready to have both or I've got to give up both.

Jitari: Would you say that pleasure and pain, from a spiritual point of view, cease to be pleasurable and painful?

S: Well, if one's mind is absorbed in a sort of higher spiritual dimension. If for instance one's mind is absorbed in meditation, or even in something greater than that, then what is normally regarded as pleasure and pain just won't influence you so much and you'll be less motivated and oriented by those things. But that will reflect in one's behaviour. It won't be that you will be just going after everything that everyone else is going after, but [that] your mind is absorbed in higher things. If your mind is absorbed in higher things you won't in fact be motivated as most people are in fact motivated. For instance, your feeling of competitiveness and having to get on in a worldly sense will be weakened. It [108] won't be that you have that competitive spirit sort of functioning fully, but your mind is absorbed in higher things: that

just won't happen. We are dominated most of the time, and guided and directed most of the time, by what we think pleasant and what we think painful. We are completely non-objective. We instinctively go after what is pleasant and agreeable and avoid what is unpleasant and disagreeable. But if our mind is absorbed in some higher dimension then that sort of motivation is much weakened and our whole life is reorganized on a different basis. We are not sort of seeking after satisfaction the whole time as usually we are.

I don't think we realize, usually, the extent to which we are dominated by the pleasure/pain principle. We can't ignore it completely because we are, at least partly, a physical organism, but we can't allow ourselves to be completely dominated by that pleasure/pain principle. Sometimes we have to quite definitely accept situations which are not agreeable and pleasant, from the ordinary point of view, and insist on remaining in those situations, because that is the way that we are going to evolve. Not that we automatically evolve when there's pain etc. but we can't avoid the incidental pain if we want to evolve in the long run.

Chintamani: Even in the initial stages of our religious life this happens, because the usual way of looking at things is unpleasant and you want something that's pleasant, permanent, solid, and real.

S: The same point came up earlier in connection with what was said about [109] particular Order members and their classes, or people in their classes. You tend to what you find pleasant and comfortable. It may be that it turns out all right in the long run, but maybe the reason you go to Upasaka A's classes rather than Upasaka B's classes is that you find Upasaka A more agreeable and pleasant and you feel something more harmonious as it were, but probably it isn't in a sort of spiritual sense, but just on a purely personal, even worldly level; which is okay, but then one must be aware of that, and Upasaka A must beware thinking that he's attracting people because of his great spiritual gifts and so on. No, it's maybe just his pleasant personality, something quite superficial, not anything profound at all.

Chintamani: I found that in my own practice, that when I was living in my last flat I didn't want to go out because it was so unpleasant outside.

S: Well, of course, there's no reason to go out if there's no reason to go out. If you have to go out in pursuit of something you recognize as objectively good and desirable, well, okay, brave the unpleasantness, but if being at home and meditating etc. is not only more pleasant but you also can see objectively that it's better, then, okay, you don't have to sort of deliberately inflict suffering on yourself as a sort of discipline. If you can evolve and have it pleasant too, then why not? The only thing is that you mustn't make the pleasurable thing the criterion. The Buddha does definitely say that there are four types of people as regards spiritual evolution: those who have it easy all [110] the way, those who have it hard all the way - and unfortunately there are some - those who have it difficult at the beginning and easy towards the end, and those who have it easy at the beginning and difficult towards the end.

Aryamitra: He divided this into types?

S: I don't recollect whether it's types in the sense of - the character is such that that's how it happens. It may be that it's fortuitous, but there are these four kinds at least, even if not types. I think I've seen some. I have seen people who've had it difficult all the way, and apparently easy all the way, and also I've seen the other two types as well. But it doesn't matter! Even if

it's painful all the way and people can even feel that it doesn't matter even if it is painful - so what? They recognize what is really important is going on and they are quite prepared to put up with the trouble. In a sense they don't mind at all - in a sense, they don't suffer, but the pain and difficulty and stress are there and they don't attempt to disguise the fact.

Sutta 2.5

S: Here also, the verse doesn't seem to have a very close connection with the story. The story itself is a quite sort of - I was going to say innocuous little story. There's not a great deal to it, but it's quite [111] representative. It's not the sort of thing that seems to have happened then and it's the sort of thing that happens now. The busy man who's got faith in the Buddha, but he's a householder, he's got various responsibilities, he can't often come and see the Buddha, though he'd like to. And that's how it is, as it were. He's just sort of left there, nothing happens, he presumably just sits there quietly for a little while and then he goes home, and maybe the Buddha doesn't see him for a few more years. And presumably the householder doesn't feel any urge to sort of get out of that situation, but the Buddha utters this verse. Maybe he uttered it on that occasion, maybe not. "One who hath mastered dhamma" - which doesn't of course just mean the intellectual understanding - "one much learned" - this must be bahusuta, one who has heard much, because learning was hearing in those days, - "hath no such thought as: Ah! 'tis well with me!" This can be taken in various ways. Either he has no egoistic consciousness of being happy in the ordinary sense, or he knows that circumstances can change, the external circumstances. "Look you! how tortured he that hath possessions!" Someone who owns things always has to be worrying about them, so one can even say that he's tortured. "One to another human folk are bound." Usually this whole question of possessions is bound up with having to look after and support other people and one is connected with them not for any objective reasons, but because of one's own personal attachment. So look how the whole thing goes on. You could say that if the verse is connected with the passage, that the Buddha is saying, as it were, 'Look, here's this man, [112] he'd like to see me, but he can't often; he's busy with his various business activities, he's got to make a lot of money, why? He's got a lot of people to support. Why has he got to support them? He's connected with them, they are relations, kinsfolk, children, and he's got entangled with them - why? Not out of any objective reason, not because he has an impartial sort of metta towards them, but just because of his own attachment. So, this is his life. That's how it is: just a sort of calm objective comment on the situation.

One finds this in quite a few episodes in the Pali canon that things are just stated. There's no attempt to make anything of it, leaving aside the verse, the little episode just ends. It isn't: 'Oh, how terrible. You're a wicked man. You ought to come more often.' That's just the situation - it's up to him.

Aryamitra: This is probably why most of the early monks were wanderers - the fact that they didn't have any attachments.

S: They were already, in a sense, half way there - in a sense.

Sutta 2.6

S: 'Accordingly he did so.' The commentary explains that he intended to purify it first by boiling. 'So that he rolled to and fro' - oil is rather indigestible.

It seems that this verse also doesn't belong particularly well to [113] the story. It's almost the same as the previous verse which is attached to a quite different sort of story. The story itself is quite interesting, at least from the anthropological point of view, because we encounter the married wanderer, and he's also a Brahmin, and the woman wanderer is about to give birth to a child. One can see that being married and living under those circumstances isn't very easy. She can't get the things that she needs and therefore she asks him to go and look for them. If one takes the verse as applying to the episode, it seems in a way a little extreme or a little severe. 'Happy indeed are they who nothing own; the folk who have won wisdom nothing own.' There's quite a profound meaning in this. One who owns nothing - it's not just external possession. One doesn't consider oneself as being anything or having anything even in a psychological or a spiritual sense, and that is wisdom: to have this sense of non-possession, even with regard to oneself. 'Look you! How tortured he who hath possessions.' I think that 'possessions' is rather too strong a word for the few mouthfuls of oil that the wanderer managed to swallow, which is why I rather feel that the verse doesn't belong to the story.

Aryamitra: Couldn't it be read symbolically: swallowing oil which is indigestible?

S: Maybe. I'm sure the episode actually happened, it sort of rings quite true. It's a rather pathetic story that the wanderer tries to get oil for his wife in this way and suffers on account of it. You could [114] even say that he suffers on account of his good nature trying to help his wife and he didn't sort of deserve to suffer at all. It wasn't a question of being attached to possessions or anything like that.

Buddhadasa: An inevitable part of samsara.

S: An inevitable part, yes. It's sad, it's unfortunate, but then this is the sort of thing that happens. If you're trying to lead the life of a wanderer along with wife and family. It's difficult enough when you are on your own. You notice how politely the husband and wife speak to each other, she addresses him as 'brahamana' and he addresses her as 'your ladyship'. It sounds a bit ironical in English, but it isn't so, or wouldn't be so in Pali. We notice all through the Pali canon that manners are very polite in Indian society in those days; that people address each other very politely and correctly, even relations, even husband and wife.

'Look you! How tortured he who hath possessions!' This can be a very general statement, quite apart from the story. 'One to another human folk are bound.'

You can see also the custom of the kind, giving away there the surplus possessions and stores and so on, allowing people to sort of eat whatever they could on the premises, but not take anything away. This was a quite common sort of practice.[115]

Sutta 2.7

S: Another familiar sort of episode: a certain layman's only son dies, the hair and clothes still wet - not because of washing but because of a sort of ceremonial ablution after you've cremated the dead body, because contact with a dead body produces impurities, so you take a ritual bath afterwards. This is still done. I've seen this done many times: you just take a dip with all your clothes on, in the Indian fashion. It's not a question of a wash. They must have taken the child, cremated him (probably at the riverside) and then immediately afterwards they all dipped into the river, and just as they were all wet - their hair wet, their clothes wet -

they came straight to the Buddha, even though it was an untimely hour. They probably felt the need for some sort of consolation, they just wanted to see the Buddha, or be with the Buddha. Then, of course, the Buddha asks what has happened. It's probably quite obvious what has happened. You can see that they've just taken the ceremonial dip, they're sad; it's pretty obvious that someone has died; but anyway, the Buddha asks, and then he's told the reason of it, and then he gives utterance to this verse: 'In bondage to the dear and sweet, many a deva, many a man, Worn with woe, submit themselves to the Lord of Death's Command.' It's quite a solemn verse and the Buddha is saying, as it were, you come here and you're all suffering, especially the father because he's lost the child and the child was very dear to him. And so this is why he is suffering. This is a natural thing, a universal thing, that if something is dear to you, you are attached to it, you lose it and then you suffer. You yourself [116] have put yourself in that situation because you are attracted to dear and delightful things, so in that way you submit yourself to the Lord of Death's command. Not only men but even gods are drawn down into the circle of birth and death. 'But they who, earnest night and day, cast aside the lovely form, They dig up the root of woe, the bait of Death so hard to pass.' Those who are not attached to the lovely form of others who are dear to them, those who have got over that craving, those who have reached a higher state of consciousness, are free from that. They've passed by the bait of death. They are not under the control of death. They don't suffer on account of death. They don't suffer when something lovely is withdrawn because they are not attached to it, they've gone beyond that, so the Buddha is saying, as it were, that there is only one way to be free from this sort of suffering, and that is not to be attached. Yes, certainly enjoy in a sense, and have the companionship, and do what you can for your child - bring him up, do everything for him - but to the extent that you are attached, to that extent you are going to suffer, and you can only get beyond the suffering by getting beyond the attachment. This is what those who are spiritually devoted do. Some loss is inevitable and some sadness, but to the extent that there's non-attachment (which means attachment to something even higher) there won't be any suffering, or you'll suffer without suffering. Like when someone near and dear dies, you can be quite sad, but you don't really suffer, because you aren't attached.

Jitari: Though maybe one may weep and there may be some expression.[117]

S: Maybe, maybe not. It's difficult to say. It also depends on the depth of your contact, because if your contact is not limited to the physical level, then you won't feel out of contact even when that particular person has died. Ramana Maharshi is supposed to have said to his disciples, who were really upset when he was about to die, 'Why are you so upset? Do you think that I'm going away?' If it's just the 'lovely form' that you are attached to, then when the 'lovely form' goes, everything has gone and so you feel completely lost, but if maybe there has been some at least appreciation of the 'lovely form', but you are also in contact with something more than that - for want of a better word, the spirit of the person of himself or herself - and you still feel that, then the absence of the 'lovely form' doesn't matter so much. It's a question of on what level you are. I have experienced a number of times, even with people I haven't known very well, the contact after death, when you definitely feel that someone is there and that a definite presence is there, the contact is there, especially if I've performed the funeral ceremony.

Chintamani: I've felt recently a kind of positive regret due to the death of my godfather, because I would have liked to have got to know him better; but it's a positive feeling, it's unfinished business in the nicest possible way.

S: It's non-finished rather than unfinished. You can't finish everything. You can't sort of tie up all the ends neatly, that's just impossible. There's something always undone; some of us know it better than others! [118]

Dhammadinna: It's like this with work. There are very few jobs in which it is possible to tie up all the loose ends when you stop.

S: Gardening is like that to some extent. You can finish something and then get on with the next thing.

Jitari: But everything grows again, the weeds and the grass.

S: Yes, but once you've done it and you know how to do it, then that's that, there's no worry. It's not a new situation demanding new skills or resources. You can let your mind roam in other fields and think things over, but at the same time you are sort of quite peacefully occupied. I'm thinking of the less strenuous kinds of gardening - I am not thinking of hay making!

When I say roam, I don't just mean idly wander, but you are in a way sort of contemplating or pondering on something that you want to ponder on and intend to ponder on. For instance, there might be something in the text that you haven't fully understood so you've just sort of kept it in mind that you want to turn it over in your mind, so you find yourself sort of weeding, and the job isn't mentally demanding so you quite deliberately turn your mind to that unsettled question. You sort of turn it over; you know what you are doing, your mind hasn't wandered, but you are just taking advantage of that opportunity. It isn't a distraction, you are aware of what you are doing, and at the same time you are sort of considering that matter and trying to come to a conclusion. I think that jobs which allow you to do this are very good, and [119] it seems that perhaps the gentler or milder forms of gardening are very good in this respect. They keep you physically occupied and busy in a rhythmical way very often, and your mind is free. Your attention isn't demanded by the job in hand, you're not unaware of it, you are not unmindfully doing it, but the greater part of your mental energy is quite consciously directed to certain other things that you wanted time for. It's not thinking about it, it's more a pondering, almost a sort of contemplating. It's active, you are sort of working at it, but in an unhurried sort of way, and a natural way, smooth way.

Buddhadasa: We don't talk very often in terms of mental energy. We talk about emotional energy and things like this. Is it Manjusri who is responsible for mental energy?

S: Mental-cum-spiritual, yes.

Buddhadasa: The contemplative power.

S: Yes, and the arts and sciences and crafts, which are on much lower level of course. You feel this when you are studying, sometimes. That's a sort of pondering and a contemplating - you're not thinking about it. I can quite happily spend the whole day like this without any difficulty. My favourite time for pondering is when I'm being driven. I've nothing to do, I'm just looking out of the window and I know that we won't be stopping for another couple of hours, and so, 'Ah well, [120] let's think about this', and turn my mind to it. It's a very pleasant experience, pondering it just while you are being driven and somebody else is looking after

all the mechanical things.

Aryamitra: In this case, also, you've got a direction. You don't have to spend energy thinking about what you've got to do next or something like that. It's like just before you go to bed you feel more active and more alive, it's almost like you've accepted the fact that the next thing you're going to do is just go to bed and so all the worries of the day and so forth - or what you've got to do next and little insecurities - vanish away and it leaves quite a bit of energy sometimes.

S: Some people feel like this in the morning, apparently. They just sort of lie in bed. They say that they are not sleeping, but they are just thinking things over and they don't want to set up because then the day begins and they have to start doing this and doing that, and thinking of this and thinking of that. When they are just dozing there (as it seems to the observer) they are just sort of turning things over in their mind they say it's a peaceful, not exactly dreamlike, state - it's more like a state of reverie, gently fantasizing perhaps.

Sutta 2.8

S: There are several references in Pali texts to women who were pregnant for seven years. I don't think it's medically possible, is it? You [121] hear of delayed pregnancies, but not to that extent. I think this must just be the Indian love of exaggeration.

p.19 '...kept her mind upon three thoughts, thus etc.' This seems to be a quite good example of the mindful attitude towards pain. You experience the pain, it's part of the business of living, part of conditioned existence, but she keeps her mind on three thoughts. She remembers the Buddha, she practises Buddhānussati as it were, and she remembers that he teaches the Dhamma, just so that one can get beyond pain such as she is at that moment experiencing. She keeps her mind also on the order of disciples who are actually following that path which leads to the abandoning of pain such as she is then experiencing. She also bears in mind that the true happiness is Nibbāna wherein there is no such pain as she is then experiencing.

'May it be well with Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah. May she in health give birth to a healthy son.' In other words, the Buddha uttered a sort of blessing.

p. 20 'Now at that time the order of monks headed by the Buddha, had been invited for that day's meal by a certain lay-follower, and that lay-follower was a supporter of the venerable Moggallāna the Great. So the Exalted One called to him: "Come hither Moggallāna! Do you go to that lay-follower and say to him: 'My good sir, Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah ... was for seven days in travail. Now she has invited the order of monks headed by the Buddha to seven days' food.' Let Suppavasa give her seven days' food and then that supporter of yours can give his afterwards.'" In other words, there was a prior invitation and there is a very strong rule (or at least custom) among the monks that prior invitations must be honoured first. In other words if someone has invited you and you've agreed to go, you can't set that aside subsequently, whoever invites you. You have to honour the prior invitation, so this is the sort of situation. Even the Buddha sort of doesn't say, 'Okay, we'll go to the daughter of the king first and we can postpone the other invitation.' No, he sends Moggallāna to ask if the previous inviter will give up his precedence, as it were, and allow the monks and the Buddha to go to the princess's [122] house first. We can see that the Buddha is very particular about these things.

p. 21 'Sir, if my lord Moggallana the Great will stand surety for me in three things, to wit, wealth and life and faith, then let Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, give her seven days' food and afterwards I'll give mine.' He addresses Moggallana, notice, in the third person. This is the polite way of addressing, to say 'be' instead of 'you'. He says, 'If you will stand surety for me in three things'; if you will guarantee three things: wealth and life and faith. I've got to wait seven days. If you can guarantee that at the end of those seven days I'll still have enough money to be able to entertain you and I'll be alive still and I'll still have faith in you and want to entertain you, then I can give up my right of prior invitation, otherwise not.

'You are surety for yourself.' This very Buddhist indeed. Moggallana, don't forget, is the disciple with the greatest psychic powers, so he says, 'I can guarantee your wealth; after seven days you will be able to afford to feed us. I'll even guarantee your life.' By means of his supernormal power or foreknowledge he knows that the man isn't going to die, or he can even prevent him from dying, but even he can't guarantee that he will have his faith. That rests with him. He's the only one who can guarantee that, nobody else. Therefore he says, 'All right I'll be your surety for your wealth and your life, but only you can be your own surety for your faith. Not even I can do that.

He appreciates the point. 'All right. I'm guaranteed that I'll still be rich enough, and I'll still be alive, okay. It's up to me whether I still have the faith'; so he agrees.[123]

'So Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, for seven days served the order of monks, headed by the Buddha, with choice food, both hard and soft, with her own hands, and satisfied them and made them eat their fill. And she caused that child to salute the Exalted One and the whole order of monks.' This often happens. I've been around in India hundreds of times when they even bring out the tiny babies and sort of bump them on the floor to make them salute you and they put their hands together and sometimes the baby cries. This is a quite common thing in Indian. This is apparently what was done.

'Well, child, are you at ease? Have you food enough? Have you any pain?' The usual polite enquiries, but the child replies, as it were: Don't be stupid. Here I've been waiting seven years to be born. Do you think I've enjoyed all that?

'Then thought Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah: My boy is conferring with the Captain of Dhamma.' Suppavasa is very pleased and proud: My boy, he's so precocious, talking with the Dhamma-senapati. This literally means the commander-in-chief of the Dhamma. That was Sariputta's title as sort of chief disciple. If the Buddha is the king of the Dhamma, Dhamma-rajah, Sariputta is the Dhamma-senapati, the commander-in-chief of the Dhamma.

Buddhadasa: What was his particular skill?

S: Wisdom.

Buddhadasa: I thought that was Subhuti.

S: Subhuti is a character who appears in the Diamond Sutra who is old and wise, but it isn't said that he is the wisest of the disciples, exactly. He also appears in the Pali canon, but I don't know what he's (?) distinguished there, but I think he's distinguished for

something.[124]

p. 22 'Would you like, Suppavasa, to have another such son?' The Buddha is thinking, 'Well, she's been through so much: for seven years pregnant and then for seven days trying to give birth to the child. Let's just ask her, let's just see. Would you like to have another son, would you like to go through it all over again? Seven other such sons?' Once the pain and suffering is over, how easily you forget.

The verse: This seems a bit more appropriate. Once you lose your mindfulness and the recollection of the pain that followed the joy, then you think only of the pleasant side of things and forget the unpleasant, and so you go into it all, all over again. If you do it mindfully, well all right: but usually people don't. If you think mindfully, 'Having one more child will mean a lot more suffering, but never mind, I want another child, I'll go through with the suffering.' But usually it isn't like that and you just forget about the suffering. You are so mentally preoccupied with the joy and pleasure that you just go heedlessly plunging in all over again. You often encounter this sort of situation. You hear people say with regard to this or that, 'Never again. I'm never going to do that again. I'm never going to get involved in it again', whatever it is. All sorts of things; and you say, 'Well, what about last time?' and they say, 'Oh, this time it's different.'

Dhammadinna: Someone I was talking to yesterday said that the thought of giving birth to the second child was in fact a very frightening and unpleasant thought because the first time she didn't know what was actually coming [125] her way, but the second time, when she was actually pregnant she wasn't looking forward to it at all, she did remember the pain.

S: Some women don't mind. They remember the pain, it's not that they don't remember it, but they don't seem to bother that much. I don't know to what extent it is just unmindfulness, or to what extent it is that they just accept that that's the price that they have to pay: if that's the way it is, okay, kind of thing.

Dhammadinna: Maybe they take an optimistic outlook that it won't be as bad this time.

S: Maybe. It is of course more painful in some cases than in others, obviously, and in some cases, barely painful at all.

Chintamani: This is the first sutta in which the word Buddha occurs.

S: I think it is, you're right. You notice also the three jewels appearing: Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. I don't think we've encountered these before in the text as a triad. Perhaps it points to a slightly later stage of development, though it still would be well within the lifetime of the Buddha himself. I'm not sure about that little dialogue with the infant. I don't know quite what to think about that. I suppose that the story would have its same force and point if she'd merely had a very difficult labour, the difficult delivery, without the whole business of the seven years' pregnancy and so on and so forth. Maybe it just was a very delayed pregnancy, a very difficult one, and maybe [126] the Buddha did help, but the point of the story is her attitude afterwards. She's already forgotten, apparently, all the suffering. Though at the same time she's not shown as without devotion and faith. At the beginning, this comes out very strongly. Maybe again, the verse doesn't really fit.

Dhammadinna: Is it something to do with the idea of sons being more important than mothers? That the son confirmed the suffering?

S: Yes. She's rather pleased at his precocity. Also, she wants seven more sons. She doesn't say anything about daughters. Again this seems to be rather Indian, or maybe oriental. The general moral here is quite clear: that pleasure and pain are bound up with one another, but when the pleasure comes first and then the pain, once the pain is over, we forget that they must go together. We remember only the pleasant side of things and go after that again and forget that there will be a sort of price to pay, and then once again we are surprised, very often.

Aryamitra: Do you mean that if you experience pleasure, you must necessarily experience pain?

S: No. It's the attachment that brings about the pain, not the pleasure itself. Pleasure need not be succeeded by pain at all, but if you are attached to the pleasure, if the pleasure arises from something [127] which is conditioned and therefore transitory, sooner or later you are going to lose it and sooner or later it's going to change. That possibility, at least, is always there. If you are attached, you are going to suffer sooner or later, but just pleasure and enjoyment by itself doesn't give rise to suffering - not necessarily, or logically it's the attachment. If you can manage to enjoy pleasure without being attached, well, you won't suffer, but that is very, very difficult, of course.

Buddhadasa: I had a similar conversation with someone the other day who said she wanted a relationship, but without any attachment. I said that this is impossible.

S: I think it's very, very difficult. When you say relationship, you mean with a capital R, as it were?

Buddhadasa: Yes, someone to look after her and her child and fill up all the duties, the pleasurable side to a relationship without this thing of attachment. I was saying that this was a reason why a lot of men are beginning to feel quite reluctant about even entering into the pleasurable side of a relationship, because of the fear of subsequent attachment. They can see it ahead.

S: Not only their own attachment, but even the sense of moral obligation that they start feeling - duty.[128]

Aryamitra: Also there is seeing the attachment of the other person - not entering into a relationship because you know that even if you don't get that attached, you know that the other person will.

S: And therefore will suffer.

Aryamitra: Yes.

S: I think also that we've to recognize that we are involved in relationships with people all the time, and not just apply the word relationship to one very special, and perhaps not very healthy, form of relationship. For instance, all Order members are related. We have

relationships with all other Order members, for the most part positive and healthy, happy, maybe not wildly blissful or anything like that, but quite satisfying and positive, creative, and ultimately spiritual.

Aryamitra: I find I don't get attached to that sort of relationship. For instance, Devaraja I've really appreciated at Aryatara, but now that he's leaving and going to London, I'm really happy for him to do that. Whereas I think that if it was a female or even a male that I was emotionally involved with, then it would be different. It would be something that I was losing, something that I'd had in the first place.

Buddhadasa: To know that they exist is almost enough.

S: Right, and that you can be in contact even apart from being sort of [129] physically together.

Chintamani: You can never possess another person.

S: You can't possess yourself. There are these relationships within the Order, which are healthy and positive and happy for the most part, but people don't sort of value them enough I think very often. They think that where there's trauma and conflict and suffering and problems, that's where relationships really are; that sort of attitude.

Dhammadinna: There seems to be this idea of working things out through relationships, but I don't think one needs to work things out through relationships. That seems to be looking at relationships in a negative, problematic way, not seeing the positive, inspirational, creative side.

S: And not seeing what's there in fact, what you've got, at least in potential. It's really, in a way, not appreciating the people that you are in contact with. It's almost sort of looking for problems and wanting sort of problem-ridden relationships. You're not quite happy with the problem-free ones, you don't think of cultivating those, you sort of hanker after a problem-ridden relationship instead.

Dhammadinna: We are all masochists.

S: There seems to be quite a streak of that in a way. And maybe there's [130] the sort of slightly neurotic, greedy side that always thinks that the other side of the fence is greener. I think that we've a lot to appreciate and be thankful for, that we actually have already, which can be cultivated still more and enjoyed still more, without attachment. Like when Ashvajit goes off to New Zealand, we are sorry to lose him in a way, but we don't suffer. We are happy that he goes and we feel that he's there and we are here, but we are very much together. We don't feel any breach of contact really.

Chintamani: I discovered that I was only frustrated and suffered because I wanted to, but then you reach a pitch where you think: well, this is ridiculous, and it goes.

S: You are putting yourself through it. Maybe the infantile bits say, 'Look how I'm suffering, look,' inflicting suffering on yourself so that someone can come along and say, 'oh, you poor little dear' and pick you up and cuddle you and pat you and smooth you down etc.

Dhammadinna: When you do reach a point where you don't really mind if someone goes or comes, if they don't also feel the same way, people think you are very cold.

S: I think that one has to be a bit careful that one isn't just callous. I think sometimes people just repress their feelings and appear very cool and not minding, but there's not much real feeling there, that they are a bit callous, and I think that one must watch that. After [131] all, you can part with someone warmly and affectionately.

Dhammadinna: But there's quite often a need in someone else: they want you to say, 'I'm going to miss you,' and if you don't they feel that.

Bodhishri: They want you to say, 'I can't live without you,' and things like that.

S: Well, you shouldn't say that: it would be rather disgraceful if you did feel that way. 'I can live perfectly happy without you, thank you, but I enjoy thinking about you and remembering you, even though we are apart,' sort of thing.

Dhammadinna: But sometimes you find that people can think you a bit cold and inhuman if they are not used to that.

S: One must be a bit careful that one isn't being actually a bit inhuman, there is also that possibility that you are in fact a bit cold.

Sutta 2.9

S: This Visakha is quite a character. She appears again and again in the Pali canon and seems to have been a rather forceful sort of lady. She was the chief of the female lay disciples and she was often known as Migara's mother, but she wasn't Migara's mother at all, she was his daughter-in-law and she came from a family that was very devoted to [132] the Buddha and she herself was very devoted to the Buddha. The family was a wealthy merchant family and she was married into a non-Buddhist family and they weren't particularly happy with her devotion to Buddhism, but she eventually managed to convert them all, including her father-in-law, which must have been quite difficult. After they had been converted (for want of a better word) and became a follower of the Buddha as a result of her influence, he was so grateful to his daughter-in-law that he said, 'From now onwards, I shan't regard you as my daughter-in-law, but as my mother,' so she was always known as Migara's mother (his name being Migara) - Visakha was her personal name. She seems to have been a lady of great enterprise and she was always going to the Buddha with suggestions for this, that, and the other. One of her most famous suggestions was that the nuns should be made to wear bathing dresses instead of being allowed to bathe naked as was the custom before. She thought this rather indecent. She seems to me to have been a bit of a sort of Mrs Whitehouse in a way, and was always urging upon the Buddha regulations of this sort. She had a very strong sense of public decency and there's quite a colourful story attached to the bathing dresses. Anyway she had her way, and the Buddha said, 'All right, if you want to provide them with bathing dresses, do so,' which she promptly did. All the nuns had to put on these sort of shifts before taking a dip. She made some quite useful suggestions too (probably that was useful too); but anyway she was a rather forceful, busy character and we can see she even deals with a king off her own bat with some business transaction of her own. She seems to [133] have been a rather emancipated sort of woman; but anyway, the business she had with the king wasn't

brought to a conclusion, it wasn't very easy even for Visakha to get that business finished, so at an unseasonable hour she comes to see the Buddha, being in town. So the Buddha asks her what happened, and she tells him, then he sees the meaning of it and gives utterance to this verse of uplift: 'Painful is all subjection' - well, she's sort of subjected to the king, she can't have her own way with the king. There's a limit to the exercise of her self-will, things don't go her way - 'Blissful is all control.' There's a suggestion it's not very easy to get control. Maybe only the king, only one man, has that. Maybe even he doesn't have it fully; there are other kings, there's life itself. So control is not easy to get: even, 'By sharing men are vexed' - the question of my contribution, your contribution, and so on and so forth. Even sharing is difficult. 'Hard to escape are bonds.' It's difficult anyway.

The Buddha is, as it were, saying to Visakha, 'What else do you expect? This is worldly life.' Here again, there's quite an interesting little 'big net'. This bustling, capable woman who'd been to see the king and couldn't quite get her way and has sort of wasted her day in town and so comes to see the Buddha in the evening and he just says, 'Well, what can you expect, that's worldly life. It's very difficult.' You notice there isn't much of the transcendental in these episodes. They are quite sort of down-to-earth and deal with almost everyday situations. Nowadays it would be sort of having to wait three or four hours at the employment exchange or the Department of Health and Social [134] Security, and you don't get what you had hoped for in the end anyway. You are just sitting there waiting for some clerk to deal with you. That's the way it is now. You really get this in India nowadays, too: waiting for officials to give you the necessary form and the necessary space. It takes days and weeks and sometimes a bit of bribery.

Aryamitra: What's the significance of saluting the Exalted One with the right side?

S: It's not with the right side, it's keeping him on the right side as you pass out. This is pradakshina, it's going in a clockwise direction. You go round any revered person or sacred object, keeping that person or object on your right so that you are going in clockwise direction round them. This is solar symbolism or custom, you may say. This is why Tibetans always circumambulate stupas and so on keeping them on the right.

Aryamitra: Is there more to it than just custom?

S: Well, I have been told (though I can't say that I've checked on this) that you generate a different kind of energy if you go round this way with some sort of sacred object or holy person in the middle, as it were. In black magic (I suppose that's the nearest term) one goes round widdershins, it's called - anticlockwise - for any nefarious rite or purpose. There may be something in that, but I can't say that I've [135] personally verified it. There is, however, this very definite tradition in India of pradakshina; 'pra' is to go forth, 'dakshina' is right, the right hand, the right side.

Bodhishri: Is this something we should practise?

S: I think it's good to try to remember it, partly because it is the custom. It is a Buddhist custom or tradition. When we, say, walk round the room in walking and chanting practice, we go round clockwise, though there are some occasions (I don't specifically remember any in Buddhism, but certainly in other traditions) where men go round clockwise and women go round inside, anticlockwise. Then you've as it were got the two balanced.

Chintamani: The Mevlevi dervishes turn anticlockwise. They go round the room anticlockwise. I don't know the direction in which they individually turn.

Dhammadinna: I think it would feel quite strange walking around anticlockwise during the walking and chanting.

S: Yes. It would feel wrong. I don't think it's just conditioning or habit. Maybe we should do some experimenting with these things.

Sutta 2.10

S: '... often gave utterance to this verse of uplift: "Ah! 'tis bliss!" It's not a verse of [136] uplift. Here the translation breaks down. This udana, this heartfelt utterance, or whatever.

p. 23 'And as they sat thus they repeated their conclusions to the Exalted One.' You see what happened. There was Bhaddiya roaming about in the forest saying, 'Ah, bliss, bliss,' and the monks all thought he was referring to his previous life as a king, or at least as an aristocrat, because the note says his mother was a Sakka-raja-devi, which means apparently the same tribe as the Buddha, but that was a republican tribe; but all their prominent people, their oligarch as we would say, were called rajas. There are sometimes hundreds of rajas in a tribe. It didn't just mean king, it meant a sort of aristocrat. So a lot of the monks thought, hearing him say, 'Ah, bliss, bliss,' he was just sort of discontented with being a monk in the forest and was thinking what a good time he'd had when he was living at home as an aristocrat and enjoying himself, so they went to the Buddha and told him about it.

The verses: again the verse doesn't seem to have all that much connection with the story, though it could have been uttered in connection with it. The story itself is quite clear; the monks just misunderstood. It just shows how easy it is to misunderstand other people. Here was he rejoicing in the fact that he was free after having lived under those sort of rather terrible conditions of anxiety and fear and suspicion, but now he's all on his own, free just like a wild deer. He felt so happy, so therefore he was exclaiming, 'Oh, what bliss,' but the monks took it differently. One of the morals here seems to be that it isn't easy to understand other people, so we must be a bit careful not to jump to conclusions. As for the verse, [137] 'In whom there are not any inward angry thoughts, Who hath gone past becoming thus-and-thus or not,' - especially in the way of rebirth, becoming a man, becoming a god, they've gone beyond it all. In other words, the suggestion is they've reached Nirvana, they're Arhants. 'Him fear-free, blissful, sorrowless, E'en the devas cannot win to see.' He's gone even beyond the sight of the gods, beyond the highest heavenly world - in other words, into a purely transcendental dimension.

Bodhishri: There is often reference to people being rich and having sort of possessions which makes them very anxious and unsatisfied, but I have met some people who are rich and who are really very happy and satisfied, who seem to have no problems, at least in Finland. They seem to have everything: beautiful houses, cars, and nice families and day are very happy.

S: But they could lose that.

Bodhishri: Yes, that's the only thing.

S: They will one day, even if they are really happy now.

Aryamitra: I've noticed with people who are quite wealthy, with swimming pools and so on, that a lot of their time is spent in securing what they've got with locks and burglar alarms and so on. Then you find that they don't sleep too well, although their outward appearance is that they've got everything they want and they're quite happy; but underlying that there's a lot of anxiety, at least in one particular family I know.[138]

S: Do they take sleeping pills?

Aryamitra: I think the man does, yes.

S: What about the people in Finland? Do they take sleeping pills?

Bodhishri: Ay dont know.

S: I was reading an account that with regard to this country, apparently 40% of people take sleeping pills at some time or other. That's really staggering.

Aryamitra: When one is talking about meditation to someone who can't understand about mental attitudes - it's just not there, it's all outward - is to refer to sleep, or when one is lying in bed at night, because you quite often find that this is when people get a play of thoughts or feelings of anxiety, and they can't sleep.

S: Sometimes people can't sleep because of excessive mental activity, it's simply that.

Dhammadinna: I sometimes experience that.

S: It may be about something quite good. It need not be worry, you just are abnormally active mentally, simply that.[139]

Aryamitra: Sleeplessness is a topic that has been discussed a lot recently. Maybe it's the hot summer nights.

S: Sometimes people are too excited to sleep.

Aryamitra: Yes, that's one reason. Sometimes I'll do a bit of yoga which helps.

S: Very often you get good sleep if you meditate just before going to bed because it stills mental activity. I think also that if you are surrounded by nature (which obviously you are not in the city) there's sort of something non-mental to get absorbed in, whereas in the city it's always people, and people means thinking, whereas with nature when you are sort of with trees and grass and the earth and the sea and whatnot. There isn't the question of thinking in the same way, you sort of lull the thoughts to sleep. You're quite happy and quite aware, and you can ponder, but you don't think or you don't have to think in the same sort of way. I think urban life does tend to increase this sort of hyper mental activity.

Chintamani: I can remember last year returning to London after a month of retreat in the country that as I physically entered the city the mental process started.

Aryamitra: My brother who's going through a particularly sensitive time at the moment says that when he comes back to London he picks up on the [140] thought-ness or thought-stuff in the atmosphere. There's a tremendous concentration of it.

S: Yes. If you think, there's an aggregation of some ten million people and they are all thinking. They've got thoughts and mental state.

Dhammadinna: More negative than positive probably.

S: You find that different parts of London have got different atmospheres, different vibrations. Any comments on this section as a whole?

Dhammadinna: It's a different phase from the previous section. The Buddha is now established with the order of monks and people are now coming to see him. He's obviously quite well known.

S: Whereas in the previous chapter, he was mostly on his own. He hadn't become well known; it was just after the Enlightenment.

Aryamitra: You mentioned that the upward breath was an expression of emotional energy; there is also the other side: 'In whom the cankers are destroyed, the taints spewed forth'. (p.5)

S: Vomiting, yes, rejection.

Buddhadasa: A yawn.[141]

S: Yes, I think the upward-going breath does cover yawning and probably vomiting. If you dream of vomiting (according to the Mahayana) it's a sign of purification, getting rid of evil. You can have quite extraordinary dreams in this connection. It's an aspect of confession of sins, that if you've confessed something and are very sorry for it, if you dream the following night that you are vomiting, it's a sign that your confession is effective. You have in fact purged yourself of that particular mental state or offence. It's quite a common religious idiom in Buddhist texts to 'vomit up' something which is evil, 'to spew forth the evil. It's a quite well known idiom signifying rejection. You reject it absolutely, almost instinctively. You can't digest it, you can't stomach it, as we say.

I believe I've said somewhere that this particular collection, the Udana, was probably compiled by that branch of the sangha which lived in or around Savatthi, because there are so many references to Savatthi, things that happened in that neighbourhood. It may well be so. It's a sort of regional collection.

Day Three

Chapter 3: Nanda

Sutta 3.1

S: Another simple little episode on which probably there isn't much to be said. It's a little bit like an episode, or part of an episode, that we had before where someone mindfully endured

suffering.[142]

Dhammadinna: Does it mean that he knows he's suffering from former actions?

S: It doesn't say that, but the Buddha knew it. Maybe he only knew it was pain, but the Buddha could see a bit more than that, and the Buddha could see that it was due to previous karma, but the attitude of the person concerned is to be the same. Just bear the pain and be mindful, regardless of whether it's from karma or any other source. If you can believe that it's due to your past karma, it's rather comforting though, in a way. You know: 'I've brought it upon myself, I'm paying now for something I did,' but you don't necessarily know that. It may seem to be purely fortuitous, accidental as it were, and therefore thoroughly unjust. But not really so, because you after all have involved yourself (as far as the Buddha sees anyway) in existence where things like that happen.

[End of recording. The remainder of day three and the whole of day four were not recorded.]

Day Five

Chapter 5: The Elder Sona

Sutta 5.1

S: There's been quite a bit of discussion around this particular sutta. Some scholars, especially Indian Hindu scholars trying to inject into it a definitely metaphysical meaning, and it all revolves around this [143] question of the self. One can either take it in a quite ordinary empirical sense, i.e. oneself, or the Self with a capital S, the great spiritual Self of the Upanishads, or some of the Upanishads. The reason why there is this discussion partly is that there is an Upanishad, the Chandogya Upanishad, where there is a conversation, and I believe it is between - I don't think it is a king and a queen, I think it's a Brahmin and his wife - around this very topic; and there the self which is meant is very clearly the metaphysical self of the Upanishads, the supreme self. Some scholars think that this particular sutta reflects that point of view, that that particular Upanishad doctrine was current in these royal circles and that it is that the king and the queen are discussing. Others say that it is purely the empirical self, that there's no metaphysics here, no Upanishadic thought here; and that seems to be borne out by the appended verse, where the application is quite clearly just ethical and where self is taken simply in the sense of oneself. Indian, especially Hindu, scholars, on the whole, like Dr Radakrishna, are inclined to see Upanishadic influence in early Buddhism, but there doesn't seem to be much of that to me. And it's well known that the most characteristic doctrine of the Upanishads and their leading doctrine (the identity of the atman and the Brahman) is just not even mentioned or remotely referred to anywhere in the whole Pali canon. So it would seem that these Upanishadic speculations weren't in fact current in circles which were in contact with Buddhism. It's probably rather doubtful whether there's any metaphysical overtone here in this [144] little discussion; it's just a plain, straightforward, rather honest exchange between these two people.

You notice the Buddha's application: 'The whole wide world we traverse with our thought, Finding to man nought dearer than the self. Since aye so dear the self to others is, Let the self-lover harm no other man.' You are dear to your own self, well, that's true of everybody. Everybody is dear to his own self, no one likes to be harmed, no one likes to suffer, so reflect

that others are even as you are. Just as you can suffer, so they can suffer. You don't want harm to be done to you? Don't do it to others. You want others to consider you? All right, you consider others. This seems to be the plain straightforward ethical meaning.

I believe this is the first occasion in the Udāna when Pāśenadi has been directly introduced. There have been references to him before so there has been a little sort of build-up, but here he appears directly, along with his queen Mallika. He was, of course, quite devoted to the Buddha.

Perhaps this sutta does underline the fact that we don't very often really feel that others are even as we are, that they also feel, that they also can suffer, that they have their own independent existence, even as we have. This leads to lack of consideration. It's a sort of lack of awareness. We obviously don't feel others' aches and pains as we feel our own. It requires a real effort of sympathetic imagination to identify with them, as it were, and at least imaginatively realize that they feel just as we feel. The same with animals, as when we say, 'It won't inconvenience them very much, they won't mind,' etc.[145]

Bodhisattva: Do you think that there is any importance in the fact that it is the king and queen who are having this conversation, because it's such a simple conversation that anybody could have said these things?

S: Perhaps the only explanation is that they did actually have this conversation. It just happened to be them. It's a quite pleasing little scene. It could be well illustrated that the king and queen had gone all by themselves (presumably retiring from everybody else) to the upper storey of the palace. Indian palaces from ancient times were built in several stories, each one smaller than the one below, as it were, and you'd go up to the upper apartments to enjoy the cool breeze, especially in the evening time, and this is apparently what they were doing. They seemed to get on rather well together, judging by all that we know from other places in the canon, the commentaries. The only problem was that the queen was rather troubled by the fact that she was excessively plain, and she consulted the Buddha about this once, according to one quite well known passage, and the Buddha said that it was because she'd been rather ill-tempered in previous existences, so she was born in this existence excessively plain. The moral was obvious: 'Let the self-lover harm no other man.' It's all summed up in that.

Sutta 5.2

S: This particular sutta introduces the word Bodhisattva, which we have not [146] had before. It means here the Buddha-to-be, simply the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni - Gautama in the days before he gained full Enlightenment. This is the first usage of the word.

'Now the Venerable Ananda, rising at eventide from his solitude, went to the Exalted One and said this.' It seems that Ananda hadn't been meditating, he'd just been thinking. He'd been thinking about the Buddha, and about his life, and the fact that his mother had died seven days after he was born and he was wondering why this was. As soon as it was time, as soon as he could decently go and disturb the Buddha, he went and asked why that was. The Buddha says, 'Shortlived are the mothers of Bodhisattvas!' This implies the whole Bodhisattva doctrine.

Buddhadāsa: It's not a literal thing, is it?

S: Well, let's take it as a literal thing to begin with; it seems intended as a literal thing. There's a reference to Bodhisattvas in the plural. This is indirectly a reference to Buddhas in the plural. A reference to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the plural suggests the whole background of cosmic development, cycles, periods in which Buddhas appear or don't appear, and so on. In other words, you've gone beyond the immediate historical situation. That's what I meant by saying that a whole Bodhisattva - and even Buddha - doctrine had been implied. I think we may be (we can't be really sure of this) at a stage of doctrinal development, which is even after the Parinirvana. We can't be absolutely sure that this does represent a development [147] within the Buddha's lifetime. It seems the verse is very ancient, but it may well be that the actual sutta, the prose part, isn't. You get, in the development of this Bodhisattva doctrine (and I'm speaking also from the scholarly point of view, not from the traditional point of view) a sort of extrapolation: what happens to this Buddha is what happens to every Buddha, it's a rule. Then, of course, you turn it round and explain what happens to this Buddha by reference to what happens to all Buddhas, that Buddhas always gain Enlightenment under a tree of some kind, or that Buddhas always gain Enlightenment at the age of 35, or they always gain it sitting on the Vajrasana, and the mothers of bodhisattvas always pass away seven days after birth, and they always have a charioteer, and they always have two chief disciples. It's as though there's a standard pattern of Buddha career, and Buddha life, sort of generalized from the life of our historical Buddha. But once that pattern is firmly established, the career of the historical Buddha is explained by saying that it had to be like that because that's the way Buddhas always do live; that is the sort of archetypal pattern. In other words, you derive the archetypal pattern from the historical situation and then you explain the historical situation as exemplification of the archetypal pattern. So the Buddha doesn't explain (looking at it from a modern point of view), he merely says, 'Well, that's the rule,' suggesting knowledge of the general rule and thereby indirectly all the other cases.

Bodhishri: What about the mother of Christ? She lived for quite a long time and [148] he was supposed to be a Bodhisattva.

S: That isn't traditional Buddhist doctrine, is it? Supposed to be? No, you can't really compare as between one tradition and another any more than you can start treating the Buddha or discussing the Buddha as an Indian messiah and trying to apply the messiah concept. It just doesn't work.

Again, 'seven days' according to tradition. That is quite interesting, and also this reference to the Tusita devaloka. That's the first reference to it. We've had Indra devaloka; Tusita devaloka is even higher and that is the world where (again according to later developments) Bodhisattvas wait before they are reborn for the last time and that is of course where Maitreya is supposed to be - even now, having practised all the perfections and having traversed all the bhūmis and been on the threshold of Enlightenment - waiting the appropriate moment when he is reborn for the last time. That is the Tusita devaloka, the world or realm of the happy devas.

With this sutta, whether it is rather late in the Buddha's own lifetime or even after the Parinirvana, we are getting into doctrinal developments. We haven't really encountered this before. We're in a slightly different world, there's a slightly different atmosphere. We are going a bit beyond the actual historical situation; but with the verse we are back still with archaic Buddhism. 'The noblemen by birth'; literally it means those of good family, or in literal translation those of family, the implication being 'of good family'. 'Would ardently

[149] pursue the Brahma-life.' The old term is still being used - Brahmacharya, not Bodhisattvacarya, Brahmacharya, the spiritual life. So seeing the way in which all living creatures come into existence and then after death pass out, just seeing this whole samsaric process, any decent person of moderate intelligence and education and sort of decent cultural background would just automatically - almost - take up the spiritual life. This is more or less what it is saying. It's as though it's a normal, natural thing for anyone of family - that is to say, someone who's been brought up in reasonable comfort, is not sort of crushed by toil and hardship and is reasonably intelligent and cultured - it's the natural thing for him to do when he just observes the whole process of life, to want to take up the spiritual life.

Dhammadinna: Is the Tusita heaven in the rupaloka?

S: Yes. As far as I recollect it's the summit of the rupaloka, but I won't swear to that. [It is the fourth of the six devalokas. See A.i.120. tr.] It's fairly high up anyway. Maybe we ought to start charting the heavens, and imagining ourselves progressing up and up at the end of the Dhammacakka Sutta.

Chintamani: I've heard that later, when they started building monasteries, somewhere in the urinals they had carved Indra's heaven.

S: Yes. Not when they started, but in Ceylon. This is a distinctly Sinhalese development - you get it in Anuradhapura - so that the monks are quite literally urinating on Indra's palace and despising all those delights. [150] Let's hope they really did. They've excavated some. Some are in museums. People sometimes don't realize what they are, but they are urinals, beautifully carved in marble. I think maybe the monks were having heaven in their monasteries. If they had beautifully carved urinals, then it's a bit much; it must have been some abbot's bright idea.

Do you feel the slightly different atmosphere, or is it me simply because I've read other texts? Do you feel that or not? You are getting a little bit (I'm not saying anything against that) into a sphere where you can't verify it yourself. You haven't come into that sphere as yet. You've been concerned with actual practices and spiritual and psychological experiences and situations and so on. Here, you are a bit into the legendary-cum-doctrinal, but you presumably cannot verify this unless you become absolutely fully Enlightened and you do discover, yes, this is in fact what happens; but short of that you just can't know; whereas all the other things you can find out and verify within your own experience, perhaps even long before you become Enlightened.

Again, there is a progression (which is quite interesting) through the whole book. It's as though, with the previous sutta, there's perhaps a very faint, distant reminiscence of some previous Upanishadic tradition, and here there's some very faint distant anticipation of some later Buddhist doctrinal developments. It's quite interesting that they come side by side, these two suttas.[151]

Chintamani: Is the archetypal Bodhisattva a Mahayana development, or does it come earlier than that?

S: It is a Mahayana development. Here within the context of the Pali Buddhism, and of course the later Sarvastivadin doctrine, a Bodhisattva is a Buddha historical (that is to say a human

Buddha) before he becomes fully Enlightened, and in as much as there are many Buddhas, there are many Bodhisattvas, but this is not a sort of general ideal. The vast majority of Buddhists aim at becoming Arhants, not at being Bodhisattvas and Buddhas; but in the Mahayana the Bodhisattva career is a career for all. This is the main difference, but in a way you would say in the Mahayana, though it becomes greatly exalted, in another sense it's cheapened: people start taking it a little too lightly; whereas in the Theravada at least they realize it's such a tremendously difficult thing, and feel that very, very few can possibly attempt it.

Chintamani: Aren't there Thai and Burmese sculptures of Avalokiteshvara?

S: Yes, but don't forget there was a Mahayana phase in those countries, so these sorts of images are left over from that phase, but subsequently strict Theravada was enforced by certain very (in a sense) kings. In Thailand there was a very important Mahayana phase.

Bodhishri: Was this Theravada tradition that the Bodhisattva was a human Buddha before he became Enlightened?[152]

S: Yes. Hinayana in general - it's shared by the Sarvastivadins - all the Hinayana schools.

Sutta 5.3
p. 58

S: '...Doubtless an almsgiving of food, both hard and soft, is toward yonder.' This really old-fashioned, archaic English. It means, 'Going on over there, there's some free bread, man!'

You notice in this sutta, too, there are a few new concepts or new doctrinal terms. Certain things we haven't actually come across before in this text, though they are quite familiar in what we may call Buddhism. There's the Pacceka Buddha concept, -we haven't come across this before - the three fetters, and the stream entry. This particular sutta seems much closer to some of the other suttas in the Pali canon, especially say the Majjhima-Nikaya, than it does to some of the other material in the Udana. It seems that we've come to a later, slightly more systematized, stage of the Dhamma, though still perhaps within the lifetime of the Buddha; though not later than the previous little sutta. I think still earlier than that. Also there's this well known series which we haven't come across before in this work, but which comes across again and again in the Pali canon generally: the series of topics on dana, sila, rebirth in heaven, and the danger - meanness(?) - of sense desires and the profit of getting free of them, as a preliminary teaching. This is also the first mention of the four truths.[153]

Chintamani: Except at the beginning in the first sutta.

S: No, not exactly, not really; not as a set of four truths. So that's also significant. It does seem actually (this is the opinion of some scholars, and it's my own personal feeling) that even the four noble truths is a relatively late formulation, though it may have been in the lifetime of the Buddha himself. That's still quite possible. This sutta represents a stage of systematization of the teaching, and development of the teaching as a doctrine, more systematic than anything we've encountered so far. You've got some very familiar categories emerging, but which weren't necessarily in circulation during the first fifteen, twenty, or even thirty years of the Buddha's teaching career.

Dhammadinna: Is this the first time the actual refuge formula is recited?

S: Yes. So in that way it's quite an important sutta from the point of view of the development of the sequence within this particular work. This conception of the Pacceka Buddha is quite mysterious. The very earliest reference to it, usage of it, in Pali seems to suggest just a solitary sage and not particularly Buddhist, sort of pre-Buddhist; but later on the Pacceka Buddha is regarded as Enlightened in the Buddhist sense, but as not actually teaching; Enlightened by his own efforts. He has no teacher and no pupils, whereas an Arhant, it is said, has a teacher, but no pupils, and a fully Enlightened Buddha has no teacher, but he has pupils.[154]

Dhammadinna: What does the name Suppabuddha mean?

S: One could translate it as 'well awakened', Buddha in the sense of 'awake' and suppa means 'extremely' or 'well'. It was a name of one of the Buddha's own uncles, who was the father of his cousin Ananda, as far as I remember.

The little verse doesn't seem to say very much really, and there's not a great deal of connection with the story.

Aryamitra: It does refer to Suppabuddha's previous life.

S: Yes, right. It does or could. There are a few points of general interest; what about his motivation? 'And at the sight he thought: Doubtless an almsgiving of food.' He hasn't come for the Dharma. This is quite interesting: his motivation originally is quite worldly, but he ends up by listening, realizing something of the truth, and going for refuge.

Chintamani: Real food.

S: Real food, yes. It means that it doesn't really matter, in a sense, how people come into contact with the movement, or with what motivation, so long as they come into contact with it, and begin to get some feeling of what it really is all about. They may come along just for the sake of a bit of social life or for a friendly atmosphere. Well, never mind, it's okay, they've come along. It's up to us to help them to feel something more.[155]

Bodhishri: It would be easy to think that somebody who has suffered very much would find it easier to understand the Dharma; but it isn't always so.

S: Sometimes it's because there's a lot of resentment on account of the suffering. To experience something and to understand something are two quite different things. I think one can say (and this has been said before) that prolonged suffering has a very bad effect on people. It certainly doesn't spiritualize them, it makes them bitter and resentful and cantankerous and all the rest of it. A little suffering may make people think, but on the whole it seems something that has a very negative effect.

Chintamani: So that in the hell realm on the wheel of life, one should primarily just try to relieve the suffering by whatever means possible.

S: Yes. This is why this whole criticism of religion and so on as escapism is so ridiculous,

because if you are suffering, why shouldn't you get out? Why not escape? What's wrong with escaping? It's the sensible thing to do.

It feels to me as though with this sutta we begin to be in the quite familiar atmosphere of what afterwards became Theravada Buddhism, whereas before we seemed to be at a stage preceding all such developments. We are with the Buddhism out of which all the schools and so on later on grew. We are in the archaic stage, but we've come on simply to the early stage, it's still of course very near the sources and origins.[156]

Dhammadinna: In the list of teachings he gives, alms-giving etc., what does one do about the heaven world? Just think about it?

S: No. This implies the teaching which later on came to be more intended for the lay people, that if you've generously, if you observed the precepts, then you would be reborn in a higher heavenly world after death. It was, of course, the later Theravada teaching that the laity should aim at that; that Nirvana was only for the monks. Only the monks were able to aim at Nirvana, but you certainly don't get that distinction early on. It's as though the Buddha sort of prepares the ground, first of all by talking about alms-giving, because it was to an alms-giving that Suppabuddha thought he was coming, and then he goes on to the next thing, sila, and then to the advantages of being reborn in a higher heavenly world; but then you find out the disadvantages: that that was impermanent, if even heaven wasn't the true goal, and the desires that bring one to heaven, even the virtues that bring one to heaven, then what is? Then he comes on to his own distinctive teaching, as it's now said to be, i.e. the Four Noble Truths. He prepares the way step by step. Also you see the Buddha looking around and seeing who is ready, sort of reading the thoughts, or reading the minds of the people in the audience. There's an interesting Pali word which is translated 'is of growth to understand' - bhabba, which literally means 'becomable', 'who is developable'.

Bodhishri: It's interesting that the Buddha didn't cure this leper of his malady and that he was killed.[157]

S: It was a young calf that gored him to death.

Bodhishri: Has it got a meaning that he was killed so very soon afterwards? Was it a kind of relief to his disease?

S: It could be. It could be a blessing in disguise, because he's reborn in a happy heavenly world. He's assured, since he's a stream entrant, of a good rebirth on earth with opportunities of further progress, after his period in the devaloka is ended, so in a way it's a good thing. Sometimes - maybe it's a little bit not exactly symbolical, but significant, that - when there's any marked change in one's life from a spiritual point of view, any rather dramatic development, repercussions in other spheres, about which it's very difficult to say, sometimes, that they are good or bad, occur. You might say, 'Well, how unfortunate, no sooner had he become a stream entrant, than he died,' but not necessarily so: he went straight to a devaloka, he was assured of coming back into a good healthy body, and carrying on from there. So who knows? His very attainment of stream entry might have precipitated that sort of happening.

Chintamani: There was no cure for leprosy in those days.

S: I don't know that there's a cure now. It was a very miserable life. One was segregated. It's interesting that as compared with the Christian gospel records, the Buddha is never shown, as far as I recollect, as [158] curing disease. It may be, of course, that in the case of the gospels, all these incidents are sort of pseudo-historical renderings of symbolical things: the disease is a spiritual disease, the death is spiritual death, and it wasn't that Christ literally went around healing sick people or bringing the dead back to life. He brought a spiritual healing.

Aryamitra: Making the blind see.

S: Yes, making the blind see in a spiritual sense, and that idiom is in fact used even here: '... show a light in the gloom, saying, 'Now they that have eyes to see can see shapes.' That's like making the blind to see. So according to some scholars, in the case of the Christian gospels, there was no question of historic fact as regards the healing ministry. There were certain idioms used by Christ in his teaching that were later on interpreted as actual healing incidents.

Dhammadinna: Is it usual, if one becomes a stream-entrant, to be reborn in a devaloka?

S: Well, it's as though there are very good mundane repercussions, as represented by the rebirth in a heaven, of your actual spiritual experience or spiritual attainment. You've wiped out a lot of bad karma.

Chintamani: In Buddhism, does the young calf have any symbolic meaning?[159]

S: Not exactly. Sometimes it's a symbol for attachment - the way the young calf follows the mother around - I don't think much more than that.

Dhammadinna: It seems to have been quite common for people to have been killed by calves!

S: According to a footnote there were a number of these, and it was a demon in disguise finishing off the Buddha's disciples, but that seems to be a later commentarial interpretation. The commentary on the Dhammapada states that 'this calf was formerly a yakkhini (demoness) who in this guise killed Bahiya, Pukkusati, Tambadathika also.' That's at least four that she gets, but anyway that's the commentary and that was several years later.

Sutta 5.4

S: This is very similar to a previous episode, with the same sort of moral.

Buddhadasa: Children can be very cruel, it seems they have an innate streak to cruelty. There's someone here in the village who's tormented by children continuously. She suffers from some sort of mental illness and she's just a ripe target for any hate from these children. It seems that one needs a scapegoat from very early on.[160]

S: It seems innate. I've observed this carefully with two young children, one girl and one boy. I've noticed that in this particular little girl there was a very definite malicious streak which seemed quite wanton, yet she'd been brought up so kindly and not frustrated, and very sort of gently corrected, if at all. It seems to me that it comes almost out of the air, out of a previous life. I haven't seen this in the little boy yet, but I've seen occasions where the little girl was spontaneously nasty and I just wondered about that because it doesn't, so far as I know the

family situation, seem to be due to resentment at any sort of frustration she's been subjected to. It does seem sort of innate.

Buddhadasa: You can see a young child perhaps try to squeeze a cat to death - this happens, and certainly a child would never experience from its parents anything like that. It seems to be definitely an innate maliciousness.

Dhammadinna: Isn't it ignorance though? Just not understanding that a cat is a creature that feels pain?

S: Sometimes it's quite clear that the animal is frightened and is trying to get away and is desperate, and the children seem to enjoy that.

Aryamitra: You also see children being very loving and caring to animals. It's a kind of double thing. For instance with --- he wouldn't mind killing a rabbit for a meal, but at the same time he'd be very loving towards ...[161]

S: This is so with all human beings, in a way. In time of war you don't hesitate to kill the enemy, but at the same time you protect your own.

Chintamani: It's like all those people with their cats and dogs and budgerigars and their Sunday roast.

S: Yes.

Dhammadinna: Children can be very nasty to each other.

Malini: They usually forget it very quickly though.

S: Yes, even in minutes.

Aryamitra: Maybe it's just an expression of what in adult life expresses itself in subtler, different ways.

S: This is also true, yes. But in connection with the case mentioned, sometimes I just couldn't help feeling that just sort of comes out of the air.

Whenever I find children around I observe them very carefully, especially very young ones, and I just wonder whether it is all due to the parents and the way they've been brought up, or whether each child doesn't sort of bring over, as according to Buddhism it does, something of the nature of what we call karma, that it's already implanted.[162]

Malini: I think it must be both.

S: Also, there's the whole question (from a Buddhist point of view) why should a particular entity be attracted to a particular womb, a particular environment. From a Buddhist point of view, karma comes in here. One can see the most well-meaning and kindly parents who have really dreadful children, and vice versa. There are some really nice children, really pleasant people as they afterwards become, growing up in the most terrible environment which you

would think couldn't do them any good and must damage them for life, but apparently it doesn't.

Malini: It does seem, though, that what does seem to be a really kindly mother is just being kind for her own sake.

S: Sure, I'm taking that into consideration. When I say kind, I mean real, genuine human warmth, not just affected social, behavioural kind of kindness. That wouldn't deceive anybody, but least of all a child.

Jitari: Children are of course individuals, it's just that they haven't lived very long.

S: That's also a feeling I get very strongly observing very young children that they are individuals from about two, as far as I've observed; fully developed in a way.[163]

Chintamani: One can observe two different kinds of conditioning within oneself. I'm certain that I've located that which has come from my upbringing without too much difficulty, but there are other things which one just cannot explain at all.

S: Then, of course, there is the whole question of heredity, which is very complex - what can be inherited. And obviously you don't inherit just from a mother and father, but from a whole line of forebears. It isn't easy to be dogmatic about what is due to parents themselves, what is due to environment and upbringing, what is due possibly to karma, what is due possibly to heredity. It's a very complicated sort of mixture.

Dhammadinna: My mother has said that she thought my brother must have been swapped over in the nursing home, because she could never understand how he could possibly be her child!

S: Well, there's the old myth of the changeling. This must have arisen from that sort of feeling: 'This can't be mine. There must be some mistake. This little horror! He's not like his parents. A little cuckoo in the nest.'

Aryamitra: They probably wouldn't say that in situations where you are really being good, then you'd be their child; but in the situations where they don't want to own you, they would say that.[164]

Sutta 5.5

S: This is quite an important sutta and it seems to belong to towards the end of the Buddha's ministry. You see an even further stage of development and systematization here. First of all, the Buddha and a great number of monks are observing 'the sabbath', in other words the lunar festival, the full moon festival. It does seem that in course of time the Buddha and his followers developed the habit or practice of gathering together on full moon days and sitting in silent meditation and chanting some Dhamma verses together. It seems that the Buddha used to lead the chanting and these verses, chanted on those occasions, were called pratimoksha or patimokkha. For instance, you remember there were some verses which were described as pratimoksha earlier on:

'Reville not, harm not, live by rule restrained;
Of food take little; sleep and sit alone;
Keep thy mind bent upon the higher thought.
Such is the message of awakened ones.' [Udana 4.6, p. 51]

This is called, elsewhere in the canon, the pratimoksha of Vipassi Buddha, an earlier Buddha. The point that I'm making is that the word pratimoksha originally meant these verses sort of expressive of the ideals taught by the Buddha, which were recited on such occasions, or verses suitable for such occasions. Later on in the Theravada the pratimoksha became simply the list of rules observed by the monks, as they became later on, and it was these rules that were recited, but that doesn't seem to have been the earliest practice. But no doubt the practice of the Buddha and the disciples getting together on the occasion of the full moon, and having a sort of festival and sitting [165] together in silent meditation and chanting Dhamma verses together, was a very ancient institution; but here you see the Buddha separating himself from it and saying, 'From now onwards you observe it by yourselves. I'm not going to take the lead any more.' According to this particular passage, the reason was that there was some fault in the assembly. There was someone present who was not really and truly a member of the community.

The whole sutta is especially important for these eight comparisons of the Dhamma with the mighty ocean. First of all (p. 65) 'Just as, monks, the mighty ocean flows down, slides and tends downward gradually, and there is no abrupt precipice, so also in this dhamma-discipline the training is gradual, the action is gradual, the procedure is gradual; there is no abrupt penetration of knowledge.' There may be a sudden flash of understanding or insight, but that usually comes as a result - or on the basis - of a very long preliminary preparation.

Chintamani: Regular steps.

S: Yes.

Malini: Why do the Asuras 'delight in the mighty ocean'? (p. 64)

S: I think Asuras, here, doesn't mean the demonic beings who are fighting the gods. It seems to be used here as a term for sort of monsters of the deep. In fact it says later on [p. 65, viii] 'The mighty ocean is the abode of great creatures. Therein are these creatures: Asuras, Nagas and Gandharvas.' Gandharvas seems rather strange. That must have crept in when lengthening the list because Gandharvas live in the sky, actually. [A note in the text says these are mermaids or sirens. tr.] The Nagas live in the ocean.

The gradualness of the training is emphasized here. You get into [166] it gradually - some more gradually than others, of course.

Bodhishri: It sort of denies 'satori' when it says there is no abrupt penetration.

S: In a sense it does, but satori doesn't arise in thin air, as it were. There is a preparation. Even if you have a satori on a sesshin, well, you've come along and maybe you've been taking interest before, and you've been studying, and then you come along to the sesshin and you practise and you meditate, and then you have a satori. The satori experience itself may be, as it were, abrupt, discontinuous, but it's arisen out of the whole preliminary practice and

experience. It's like the block breaking at the twentieth blow.

'The mighty ocean is of a stable nature, since it overpasses not its boundary.' Well, sometimes it does, but we won't go into that. 'Even so, monks, my disciples transgress not, even at the cost of life, the training enjoined on them by me.' The monks stick to the path, as it were. The followers stick to the path, just as the ocean sticks to its bounds. Obviously this isn't a very easy thing to do.

Then, the ocean rejects dead bodies, it throws them up. In the same way, any person who doesn't really belong to the Sangha - isn't really following the Dhamma - sort of automatically gets thrown out, even without anyone taking the sort of action that Moggallana did in fact. In fact we notice this ourselves: people who come along, and maybe in a sense join, but either because of some sort of, in a way, moral fault, or just because they are not on the same wavelength, not really tuned in, not really trying to lead a spiritual life, sooner or later they do [167] drift away, or even break away. They are just inharmonious, incompatible. They'll even feel uncomfortable after a while if they are sort of coming into an assembly where everyone is in a meditative mood and is devoted to the Dhamma. If they are not, sooner or later they just won't feel happy there, they'll remove themselves.

Then, just as the different rivers lose their separate names when they reach the ocean, so the four castes do (I think this is the first time they've been enumerated) on going forth. You notice that here then nobles come before the Brahmins. In the Brahminical works, in Hindu literature, Brahmins always come first, but there was a long struggle between Brahmins and Kshatriyas and in many parts of India, the Kshatriyas were reckoned as superior to the Brahmins and the Pali version of the list reflects that sort of affairs. The Brahmins decisively asserted their supremacy only during the Gupta period, when of course Buddhism started waning or being destroyed.

Then, just as even though all the rivers flow into the sea, the sea doesn't overflow, in the same way, all those monks gaining Nirvana, Nirvana doesn't become over-full. There's a new technical term: 'that condition of Nibbana which has no remainder.' That is, the Nibbana, which occurs after the physical body drops away. This is the first time that this technical term occurs in the Udana: 'anupadisesana-nibbana' it's called, as distinct from klesa-nibbana. Sometimes it's called khandha-nibbana: the nibbana of the five skandhas as opposed to the nibbana of the passions. Anupadisesana-nibbana means nibbana without remainder or without adjunct, or without accessories, i.e. the accessory [168] of the physical body or psychophysical organism.

Then, very importantly, just as the whole ocean tastes of salt, in the same way the whole of the Buddha's teaching has got only one flavour, one characteristic, one meaning: vimutti, freedom, nibbana. It all tends to that, it's all concerned with that, simply a means to that.

Number seven is very interesting, because you've got your first list of lists, which suggests a quite late stage in the Buddha's teaching career. Just as in the great ocean there are many gems, so you've got these doctrinal categories: 'the four arisings of mindfulness', that is mindfulness of the body, feelings, thoughts, and dhammas (spiritual principles) - the four foundations of mindfulness. Then 'the four best efforts', to eradicate the arisen unskilful thoughts, to develop the unarisen skilful thoughts, to guard the arisen skilful thoughts, and to prevent the arising or the unarisen unskilful thoughts.

The whole of this list of lists was later on known as the 37 Bodhipakkhiya dhammas, the 37 wings or limbs of Enlightenment, or the 37 practices conducive to Enlightenment, and these are dealt with in 'A Survey of Buddhism' but perhaps not in very great detail. I've dealt with them at length in a volume which is unpublished as yet: the third volume of what The Three Jewels is the first. That volume isn't finished as yet. I left it unfinished when I left Kalimpong in 1964, but I did get as far as completing an account of all these 37 Bodhipakkhiya dhammas in detail. The second volume, of course, is the one on the Buddhist scriptures, which is complete, but not yet finally revised or published [since published as The Eternal Legacy, tr.]. I don't recall 'the four bases of psychic power', but the [169] five spiritual faculties are faith, vigour, mindfulness, meditation, and wisdom. The five powers are the same faculties but considerably strengthened and made much more solid and permanent. The seven limbs of wisdom - seven bodhyangas or factors of Enlightenment - is of course a very important series. First of all, mindfulness, investigation of mental states (dhammas), energy, rapture, calming down, samadhi, and then upekkha (these are referred to in Mind - Reactive and Creative [published as Buddha Mind. tr.]; it represents the positive series). There is a definite method in this sequence which is quite important. Firstly, sati is mindfulness or awareness in the ordinary sense: awareness of the mind here. Then when you become aware of all your different states of mind, you start distinguishing between them; you start discriminating the skilful from the unskilful. The dhamma you are discriminating here is more dhamma in the sense of mental states. You are analysing your own mental states. You are trying to see what among your own mental states are healthy, skilful, and what are unskilful - just sorting them out. It implies a sort of understanding of the Dhamma, because where is your criterion if you don't know the Dhamma? If you don't know the Dhamma you might think something is healthy which is unhealthy, and vice versa. With the help of your understanding the Dhamma, you sort out what it is in your own mind - mental states, attitudes - that is skilful or unskilful. Then you summon up your energy (virya) to cultivate the skilful and not cultivate the unskilful and all that that implies.

Jitari: It's there the four efforts come in.[170]

S: Yes, they could come in there. They are a more expanded form of that. As a result of that your whole being becomes more integrated, your energies are flowing much more together, your skilful side becomes predominant, you experience higher states of consciousness, it brings you to the level of consciousness, of concentration, and so on. As a result of that you start feeling intense joy and rapture and bliss, in other words priti. After a while, the bubbly side of the priti calms down and you then experience samadhi (which is not just concentration), a very high spiritual state. From there you go on to upeksha, which is not just equanimity in the sense of the four brahma-viharas, it is upeksha in the sense of Nirvana, transcendental equanimity. That is the sequence. Obviously, it is a version of the positive nidanas.

Bodhishri: This is maybe more intellectual.

S: Maybe, or more psychological. It's a shorter version, as it were, of the twelve positive nidanas.

Chintamani: Presumably it's possible to regard this as not only illustrating the whole path, but also different phases.

S: Well, you see, you go up through all seven on a lower level, and then all seven on a higher level, and so on like that.

Bodhishri: Does it mean that you repeat the whole process?[171]

S: In a sense, yes, but on higher and higher levels. For instance suppose you've got a modest practice of mindfulness, and a modest practice of this, and a modest practice of that, leading up to a modest this, but you can't go on any further so you have to go back and strengthen this, and then strengthen that, and so on, so that this is quite strong. Then you find that you can't get any further so you go back and then you finally actually perfect that, then that is perfected, and that is perfected, until this is perfected, and then you are right at the top.

Chintamani: It's quite organic.

S: Yes. You know quite well, even with a plant if it's stunted in its early stages, the flower of the fruit will be stunted.

Chintamani: That raises the whole question of one's capabilities and not trying to do what is ten stages ahead, now.

S: Well, if you are on the path of regular steps, anyway.

Then of course, there's the Aryan Eightfold Way. So you've got the fours, then the fives, then the sevens, and then the eights, so it's a sort of numerically arranged list and it seems to be a sort of list of lists, and it comprises all the practical teachings of the Buddha so far perhaps, and as the 37 aids to Enlightenment it became quite famous and basic later on. This is the first of the lists of the lists, and probably the most famous and important. These are all practices, exercises.[172]

Then eighthly, just as the ocean is the abode of great creatures, so the ocean of the Dhamma is the abode of great creatures. I think this is the first time you've got this list of the stream-entrant, and the once-returner, and the non-returner, and the Arhant. These are like great monsters, spiritual monsters, disporting themselves in the ocean of the Dhamma, the four Holy Persons.

Chintamani: Is the once-returner a Bodhisattva?

S: No. A once-returner is one who, before the attainment of Nirvana, will return only once more in a human birth. The non-returner doesn't come back to earth. He hasn't gained Nirvana, he's not an Arhant, but he's born or reborn in higher heavenly worlds called the pure abodes, and from there attains Nirvana without coming back to earth.

Chintamani: Are the pure abodes the brahma-viharas?

S: No. The brahma-viharas are abodes here and now, abodes of mind, meditative states of good will, compassion, and so on.

This is the first sort of riddling verse, or paradoxical verse. If you try to hide, something will be sort of broken into, like that monk that had to be taken out, marched out; so he 'covered

up', but the rain came through. It was only those who were 'open' that the rain didn't come through. 'So open up the thatch; thus will it not rain through.' A paradox. The first time we've had paradox in the Udana. It doesn't [173] come very often in the Pali canon at all, actually. So this is quite an important, almost poetic, sutta. Again, this could be the basis for a talk. We'll have to go a bit more into our lists, especially the seven bodhyangas; this is very important. This sutta contains quite a lot of fairly straightforward and useful material.

This is the first time where there is a formal assembly, where they are observing the uposatha. It's the first reference to that and it seems pretty certain that this did happen during the lifetime of the Buddha and that they either meditated silently together or chanted these Dhamma verses called patimokkha.

Aryamitra: Would it be like puja?

S: No, I don't think so. I don't get that feeling at all. In a way they didn't need to do any puja, most of them anyway.

Sutta 5.6

S: We can see, in this sutta, quite a late stage in the spread of the Dhamma during the Buddha's lifetime had been reached. The Dhamma has reached Aranti, which is down towards South India. There's an elder monk living there, there are disciples, but there are not very many monks. But by this time the organization is fairly well advanced and the rule that ten monks must gather together to give an ordination has been laid down and is being faithfully followed, even in spite of difficulties, and there are communities and there are disciples, and ordinations are being [174] given, even without the Buddha himself being seen personally. Also, one can see from what happens later on that a whole series of Dhamma verses was known and regularly learned by heart, the beginning of what later became the scriptures. All this in an area remote from where Buddhism started and without the Buddha himself having to do anything personally. You can see the Dhamma is becoming very well established. The sixteen sections of the eights, the [Atthakavagga], is now included in the Sutta Nipata and is the oldest section of it, along with the [Parayanavagga]. It's very archaic and very profound material indeed. The chapter of the eights has sixteen sections and it is all quite profound. It's a quite profound and subtle sort of psychological-cum-philosophical approach and the language is very archaic, and possibly it's even older than the verses of the Udana themselves.

You see the situation. Buddhism is flourishing in a way quite independent of the Buddha himself. It's all established. There's a Sangha, there's a community of monks. They can get together the ten needed for an ordination, they can give ordination, they can teach; there's a whole series of verses that can be learned by heart and reflected on. But the Buddha is still alive, so naturally some newly ordained monk will want to go and see him personally having up to that time merely heard about him. The 'well done' (p. 71) by the way is of course 'sadhu', previously translated as 'excellent'. 'Sadhu, sadhu!'

You notice Ananda's thoughtfulness. He arranges for the newly arrived monk to share a lodging with the Buddha so that they can have a little personal contact. It's all still very friendly and formal. The [175] Buddha isn't even like a modern abbot. He's got his own room, where presumably Ananda usually also stays, but when a monk arrives who's never seen the Buddha before, Ananda very thoughtfully arranges that the monk should share the same

dwelling, the same lodging, and then during the night when they are both alone they can have a quiet exchange. You can see that in a way it's all very unorganized, it's all very personal. If you went, say, into a modern monastery in, say, Thailand or Japan, the abbot wouldn't treat you in this way; and look how the Buddha is behaving quite naturally and straightforwardly, simply. You notice that the Buddha doesn't sleep very much. He spends a great part of the night seated in the open air and he gets up before dawn, and the monk does likewise.

The Buddha also praises the monk: 'You are blest with charming speech, distinctly and clearly enunciated, so as to make your meaning clear.' This sounds very much nicer in Pali than in English. It sounds a little bit stilted, but I'm sure it doesn't read like that in Pali.

You notice also that the Buddha is referred to as naga, which means elephant, or even serpent.

Bodhishri: I wonder what age Sona was. It says he was a householder for a long time. [sic. The text does not say this; it says that 'for long [he] had seen the danger in passions'. tr.]

S: It doesn't say, does it? Maybe he was an elderly person and maybe the Buddha was quite surprised that such an elderly person had been a monk for only a year. [Sona was considerably younger than the Buddha. See Thag.A i.429. tr.] You sometimes find this even today in the East, when you meet some elderly person who looks as though he's been a monk for twenty or thirty years, and you always ask how many years you've been a [176] monk so that you know who is senior, and he might say, 'Two years', and you are quite surprised. He looks as though he's been a monk sort of longer than you've been alive, but actually not, so technically he's junior.

Bodhishri: So it is quite possible to live according to the Dhamma as a householder?

S: Well, in this particular case, Sona the lay follower, the upasaka, was living as the attendant of that elder monk, so it's as though he wasn't actually living at home at that time, so maybe there was a sort of intermediate period - that he lived at home, he was a householder for a while, and then he became attached to the elder and he lived with him or near him and looked after him and followed the Dhamma, and only after that intermediate period he became a monk.

Aryamitra: What does Sona mean?

S: Literally 'gold'. Mr Gold! Then he became a Bhikkhu Gold, brother Gold! You notice there's no changing of names at this stage. People keep their previous names.

Dhammadinna: When did that begin?

S: I'm not sure, because I think what happened was that when families were [177] Buddhists and then the question of giving names arose they liked to give names which had Buddhist associations, so even a child was given the name Sariputta and so on, and when they became monks, well, obviously they kept those names. Those who became monks from non-Buddhist families had the definitely non-Buddhist Hindu names, even the names of Hindu gods and goddesses. When they became ordained, at that time it seemed quite inappropriate, no doubt, that they should have those names, and so they changed them. In Ceylon (which is after all a country that was converted to Buddhism) they seem to have adopted new names on

ordination, but it wasn't there right at the beginning.

Chintamani: I rather like the Western use of brother and sister. It's got a nice ring to it.

S: Do you think so? I'm a bit doubtful about that.

Aryamitra: I think it's a bit overused in the West for all sorts of things. Trade unionists call each other brother, and then there's the sisters on the hospital staff. I don't think there's a need to use anything.

S: Yes. I think titles are being dropped generally. Even just a few years ago you would never address an envelope just to, say, John Smith. It was always Mr John Smith or John Smith Esq. But very often now we don't put the Mr or anything like that. Banks and businesses still use 'esquire', especially if they are soliciting your custom.[178]

Aryamitra: What does esquire mean?

Chintamani: An attendant or a knight.

S: Later on an esquire meant someone in rank midway between a yeoman and a knight. He was a landed proprietor, but at the same time he didn't work on the land. He was a gentleman. For instance, even in Jane Austen's novels you find this, this subtle distinction between whether someone is entitled to be addressed as esquire or not. Someone who is a well-to-do merchant and technically a yeoman - for instance, someone who'd risen from a yeoman family - he might be addressed as so-and-so esquire, but strictly speaking he wasn't entitled to it and that was still a matter for enquiry in those days. But during the last century practically everybody started being addressed as esquire just if he was fairly well-to-do.

Sister was the regular mode of address for nuns in the Pali scriptures: Pagini, which meant sister. Nuns are usually addressed as sister, both by lay people and by monks.

p. 72 The verse: 'Seeing the danger in the world, knowing dhamma free from base.' Base is the base for future rebirth. 'The Ariyan joys not in evil, in evil the pure joys not.' This is the first time that Ariyan has been used, as distinct from its adjectival use in Ariyan Eightfold Path, the Ariyan as the spiritual person, not a racial type - a spiritually developed person. Very technically the Ariyan means either the Arhant, the non-returner, the once-returner, or the stream entrant. These are called the Ariyans.[179]

Bodhishri: This word 'base', how was it used?

S: 'Base' is nirupadhi, a basis for future rebirth. It's something within you, something psychological, on account of which you are liable to future rebirth. So it is a basis for future rebirth. In Nirvana there is no such basis.

You notice the Buddha's 'anxious' - inverted commas - enquiry when the monk arrived. This is very characteristic. The Buddha was well known for this because many other teachers apparently, so we are told, would never be the first to speak. To be the first to speak was apparently to make yourself a sort of inferior. If you were superior, like the king, the other person had to speak first and greet you and then you would greet him, but the Buddha never

followed this. He was always the first to greet and welcome and exchange greetings. So he says, 'Are you bearing up, monk? Have you support? Are you little wearied by your journey hither? Are you worn with alms-questing?' These sound a bit stilted in English, but they are all very idiomatic in Pali. Are you all right? Have you had a good journey? Did you have any trouble on the way?' This sort of enquiry.

So the Buddha calls out to Ananda. You can imagine that Ananda is hovering about nearby, not too near but not too far either, within earshot, always ready.

Maybe the Buddha was very surprised with Sona's recitation. Maybe he didn't realize that there were these whole chapters of Dhamma verses being compiled and recited by monks. Maybe it was quite a pleasant surprise. It could have been something relatively new then.[180]

Bodhishri: Has the Sutta Nipata been translated into English?

S: There are two translations, one by Chalmers and one by E.M. Hare as 'Woven Cadences of Early Buddhists'. It's quite easily available in this same series, but the language again is very difficult - I mean the English, though also of course the Pali. It's this rather archaic old-fashioned English, unfortunately.

Buddhadasa: Was this done deliberately? Did they consciously decide to use this archaic form of English?

S: I don't know. I think perhaps they couldn't help it or they thought somehow it was appropriate.

Chintamani: Biblical.

S: Well, it's not even biblical. Mrs Rhys Davids in her own prose writings affects this sort of Anglo-Saxon style: all monosyllables. And she uses expressions like 'couth'. We've got uncouth, which is idiomatic, but we don't use in our days the word 'couth' as she does. It isn't strictly Anglo-Saxon, it comes down from Middle English.

Chintamani: Was this at the end of the last century?

S: Mrs Rhys Davids, end of the last, beginning of this. She died in the [181] thirties as a very old lady. It's William Morris in a way. It's really terrible. I've got a book called English Prose Style by Herbert Read, and he gives a really priceless quotation from William Morris. It's this sort of English - and this was only seventy of eighty years ago. This shows you where it really goes back to. It's a short story by William Morris with of course a medieval setting, all about knights jumping onto horses and riding away with damsels being delivered from distress wringing their hands and being all weak and helpless. In some of these romances the women only exist in order to be carried off; you never hear what happens afterwards apart from being rescued, and nothing happens even then, they are just rescued. They probably just wait around until they are carried off again and have to be rescued again. In between they wring their hands and weep.

Bodhishri: In the note it says that the Sutta Nipata begins with the Kama Sutta. (p.71)

S: This particular section is the fourth section of the Sutta Nipata. There are five sections, each one consisting of various suttas. It's a very important work, the Sutta Nipata, but the language and even the thought are very difficult, much more difficult than the Udana. There's no comparison. Though again there's some quite late material in it, especially in the last book. Again it's a very well organized little work. It's about as long as the Udana and Itivuttaka together, maybe a little longer.[182]

Sutta 5.7

S: Here you've got that word 'musing' again. It's translating 'meditating' in the sense of actually experiencing higher stages of consciousness - the dhyanas - and dwelling in them. Not just the concentration exercises that get you there; not meditation in that sense. There's a very clear sort of hint here, or indication here, that it's only actual experience of meditation and the spiritual life that resolves doubts. You're not going to resolve your doubts theoretically beforehand and then start. Your doubts get resolved only in the course of your own spiritual experience.

Jitari: Would you say that contemplation would be a better word still?

S: No, contemplation I generally reserve for insight, which suggests something transcendental. Seeing reality itself. Jhana, or meditation in that sense, is still short of that.

'What doubts soever as to here' - that is this world - 'or yonder' - the other world, the life after death, Nirvana - 'Felt by themselves, or doubts that torture others, - Musers renounce them one and all, for musing' - dwelling in higher states of consciousness - 'they live the Brahma-life with zeal and ardour.'

Your doubts are resolved only as you get into higher stages of superconsciousness in pursuit of your Brahmacharya, your whole spiritual life. You can't have it all worked out intellectually first and then [183] begin. That isn't possible. Doubts evaporate gradually as you actually progress. It makes it very difficult for intellectual people, who find it very difficult to get started when they don't know or are not certain and haven't got all the answers. But trustful people who don't think too much have a much easier time and get started much more easily. You notice at least twice the Buddha has said, referring to a certain disciple, 'He did not bother me with questions about the Dhamma.' i.e. he just got on with it.

Has anyone heard of the 'Old Buddhist Community' in Germany? They are a community started by Georg Grimm in the twenties and they still continue. They are a community in the wider sense, not just a residential community, and they call themselves 'Old Buddhists', in the sense that they try to base themselves on what they believe is the archaic Buddhism recorded in the scriptures before the rise of the later Theravada. It occurs to me that sooner or later we ought to establish contact with them. They have a magazine called 'Yana'.

Bodhishri: Whereabouts in Germany are they?

S: It's an out of the way part of Germany. They have a centre where they gather regularly. [The Altbuddhistische Gemeinde is based in Utting, in Bavaria. tr.] They seem very serious people and they mainly follow Georg Grimm's writings. His main work is 'The Religion of the Buddha', which is still in print and available at the centre bookshop.

Revata was nicknamed the Doubter. Presumably he was particularly susceptible to doubts and he got rid of them only through meditation.[184]

It's not that your questions aren't answered, your doubts being [re]solved doesn't mean that you get answers to your questions, or not necessarily, but you're dwelling in a state of mind where doubts no longer bother you because the questions on which the doubts are based no longer bother you. Sometimes you find yourself in a state where you don't worry. Nothing has changed. You don't know any more. The situation isn't any different, but you just stop worrying. Not that you've sorted everything out. Suppose you're short of money and you've been worrying how to get some; the next morning when you wake up, you're not worried about the money in the least. The objective situation is the same - you still haven't got any - but you're just not thinking about it any more. It's rather like that. Resolving doubts doesn't necessarily mean getting an answer to your questions. It means more - at least sometimes - that the question no longer arises. The question ceases to be a question, but the doubter usually wants to get rid of the doubt by finding an answer, and when you give him the answer he raises a further difficulty.

Chintamani: So that getting answers when you are in that state of mind is not the point at all.

S: Not the point at all, no.

Chintamani: It's like dealing with the symptoms rather than with the cause.

S: Yes.[185]

Sutta 5.8

S: Here we see Devadatta at work. We've encountered him once before simply as one among a number of monks, but here we see Devadatta actually creating a schism. How does he do this? Well, here the scene is Rajagaha, the Bamboo Grove, and it's the full moon day, the time when they all gather together - the Buddha and all the other monks. Devadatta says, 'I'm not going to join in. I'm not going to join the common assembly. I'm going to go off (presumably) with a group of my own followers and I'm going to have an assembly of my own.' Now, when the monks spread out, when the Dhamma spreads out over a vast area, obviously they can't all meet together at the same time, so that if there are other meetings being held at the same time in other places far away, that's one thing; but when you are all in the same place but you deliberately won't join together, then that is schism and this is what we find Devadatta doing. It says he meets Ananda in the street on the day of the full moon, and he knows that in the evening there is going to be the meeting, but he says, 'I'm not going to be there. I'm going to have a separate meeting (presumably) with some of my own followers. We are not going to join your meeting. That is schism, and this is of course disastrous. The motive - though we are not told so, it's implied - is just a sort of separatism and pride and the desire to have one's own little group as it were. Even though everything is owing to the Buddha they are going to even 'observe the sabbath and the ordinances of the order' which the Buddha had laid down, but they are not going to join in. They are going to break away from the rest.[186]

Chintamani: What does Devadatta mean?

S: 'Given by God; - Theodore - Devadatta. Of course, in Buddhism even Devadatta will

eventually be saved.

Malini: Was he an Arhant, Devadatta?

S: No. An Arhant couldn't have done that. He wasn't even a stream-winner we're told, but he had meditated and gained psychic powers and these misled him. He became puffed up on account of his psychic powers apparently, and deviated into magic and miracle working and even a bit of black magic. You can see the type. He wanted to set up his own show. So what does the Buddha do? The Buddha doesn't do anything. He just sees what's going on and says, 'Easy to do for the wicked are wicked things, But hard to do is wickedness for Ariyans.' (p.73)

Devadatta can't be an Ariyan. He finds it very easy to do something wicked. He creates this conflict. You notice the difference between that little scene in Avanti with the monk. Sona, who has been ordained and who has learned the scripture as they afterwards became, is practising quite well, has not even seen the Buddha, but he is loyal to the movement as a whole and even wants to go and see the Buddha. But there is Devadatta living in the same place as the Buddha, wants to break away and have his own separate group, his own separate movement, even though following the lines, more or less, laid down by the Buddha, at least externally.[187]

Sutta 5.9

S: This is rather scathing, as scathing as anything the Buddha has said so far in the Udana. 'With wandering wits the wiseacres range all the field of talk; With mouths agape to full extent, what leads them on they know not.' Here they are talking about everything, but they don't know why they are talking. It's neurotic talk. They don't know why they are doing it. They are unconscious of what is impelling them.

Aryamitra: How do you define neurotic?

S: Oh dear, I've been wondering about that for a long time; but you all know what I mean! A definition would certainly include this fact of being motivated by forces of which you weren't conscious. But we can say that this is what happens to everybody all of the time in a general way, so what distinguishes the neurotic person particularly?

Bodhishri: Maybe it's someone who has experienced dukkha, but can't bear it so hard and gets lost in it.

Malini: It's repetitious.

S: It's repetitive, yes.

Chintamani: Repetitious, compulsive behaviour.[188]

S: Yes, that's a good definition. 'repetitive, compulsive behaviour'. An example I sometimes quote is of a woman I knew. When I got to know her she was in her early seventies - and I knew her till she was nearly eighty - and she was a repetitive, compulsive talker. She just didn't stop. When I first got to know her I didn't know about this. Unsuspecting, I went along to breakfast one day at her invitation and I was there until evening for dinner and we had all

our meals in between and she didn't stop talking once. Not once. I don't know where she got the energy from. She was always like this. Another friend of mine got to know her and they even set up house together. That was a really weird, strange sort of set-up. But anyway, this went on for years and years and years until she died practically. She died when she was 85 or 86 I think. She was a very well-to-do woman with a tremendously strong character in the superficial sense, a real battle-axe and a very difficult person, with lots of money. This particular person told me eventually that he'd got to the bottom of it all, because one day she told him that many years before she'd murdered her husband. We talked about it, this other person and myself, and we came to the conclusion that she wanted to confess, but could never come to the point. Then could never actually confess, so she just went on talking and talking. She was never able to complete the action, that is, to confess. She was a doctor by profession and she'd married what she described as a degenerate member of the aristocracy who was always drinking and running after women and he fell ill. Then she said, 'Then I had him where I wanted. I had nurses looking after him. They held him down. They didn't let him go out.' She told me all this, [189] but then she added to this friend: one day she got it out that she'd helped him to die. She'd put something in his medicine and that was that. She wanted to get rid of him, and of course she inherited all the money.

Chintamani: Did she stop talking after that?

S: She was better, but I don't think she really got over it, because why did she kill her husband? There's a lot behind that. He had six nurses looking after him and holding him down and not letting him get out of bed and go out of the house and so on and so forth. She was a very, very strong-minded woman in a way and she was a Buddhist - a Theosophist Buddhist. She was more Theosophist than Buddhist and she was of Canadian origin and used to represent Canadian Buddhism, such as it was, at international gatherings. She was always flying here and there, representing this or representing that. She was an 'Oddfellow' and a member of the 'Men of the Trees'. She was the first woman in Canada to fly an aeroplane and the first woman in Canada to own a car, in 1901 apparently. Irene, her name was. With a bit of luck there'll be a character sketch of her in my memoirs. [Irene Bastow Hudson, see *In the Sign of the Golden Wheel*, p.64 and *passim*. tr.] She believed in black magic and she was always going on about the Dugpas getting you and things like that. She wrote a very interesting book, which she wouldn't allow to be published (she had quite a lot of knowledge) on blood and its uses in magic and it was really interesting. I don't know what happened to it when she died. She said that she didn't think it would be safe [190] to have it published and that the Dugpas would be after her. She lent it to me in a weak moment, and I read it very rapidly in a matter of hours and then I gave it back. It was really interesting. She'd done a lot of research, even from a scientific point of view, into what blood was and what its properties were and correlated this with various occult traditions. It was a very interesting book and I think it should have been published.

(p.74) 'What leads them on they know not.' Repetitive, compulsive behaviour, the Buddha says.

Sutta 5.10

S: The commentary, apparently, has an interesting explanation of 'win the prize in first and last.' What comes first is meditation and what comes last is insight.

Chintamani: Vipassana is insight, what's the other term?

S: Samatha, calm, calming down of unskilful states so that only purely skilful states are left.

Bodhishri: Was Culapanthaka sitting alone or in a group and all the others who referred to sitting in this way?

S: It doesn't say. Presumably under a nearby tree, maybe the monks just [191] sort of scattered. That seems to have been the practice: that after they'd eaten and digested their food, they'd scatter and find a little places in the neighbourhood under a tree or in a shady nook and just sit quietly either meditating or reflecting, and then maybe gather in the evening. The Buddha would give a talk and there'd be some discussion. So maybe the Buddha just looked and saw a particular monk nearby and made this comment. It seems a quite idyllic sort of life that they used to lead - or reading about it sounds quite idyllic, let's put it that way.

Buddhadasa: Some of them would be sleeping, no doubt.

S: Not with the Buddha around. It seems as though the Buddha kept a sharp eye on everybody and knew exactly what was going on.

[The recordings of days 6 and 7 are lost]

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