

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

THE VASALA SUTTA

Seminar held in Glasgow 1982

Present: Venerable Sangharakshita, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Lalitaratna, Keith Mitchell, Vajrananda, Bernie Tisch, Darren de Witt.

S: All right, we're going to go through the Vasala Sutta. The Vasala Sutta is one of the short suttas in the first book of the Sutta Nipata. I take it everybody has some idea of the Sutta Nipata. The Sutta Nipata, which Hare translates as Woven Cadences, is by and large one of the older, if not one of the oldest, parts of the Pali Canon. You're no doubt aware that the Pali Canon is divided into three pitakas, that is to say, first of all there's the Vinaya Pitaka, the collection of discipline, then there's the Sutta Pitaka, the collection of discourses, and then the Abhidhamma Pitaka, the collection of the higher teaching. Then the Sutta Pitaka is divided into five nikayas, or great groups of suttas. For instance, there's the Digha Nikaya, the collection of long discourses of the Buddha, the Majjhima Nikaya, the collection of medium length discourses, and so on. The fifth and last of these nikayas is the Khuddaka or miscellaneous. That contains fourteen different works, some of them quite old, some of them not so old, and the Sutta Nipata is one of these. The Sutta Nipata divides into five books and each book consists of a number of short suttas, some of which are very, very old indeed and may well go back to the days of the Buddha himself. Some of them are in, sort of, verse form, even in ballad form. It is as though, in the days of the Buddha, when there were no tape recorders or anything like that, some of the monks, even maybe the Buddha himself, made up series of verses which epitomized the teaching. Some of them were dramatic or semi-dramatic, a bit like Scottish border ballads but of course with a Dharmic content. They can in fact very well be called ballads, some of [2] them, and the monks used to recite them to themselves just to ensure that they held the Buddha's teaching in their memories and they'd also recite them to other monks, other wanderers, lay people, and in this way they were handed down from teacher to disciple and eventually incorporated in the Pali Tipitaka - the Pali Canon. You get a sort of idea of the process. So the Vasala Sutta is one of these verse suttas of the Sutta Nipata from the first book. It is not exactly a ballad, it's not very ballad-like, but at least it's in verse and it has a rather dramatic introduction and a rather dramatic conclusion. So this is what we're going to study. There are altogether ... I think it's twenty-five verses, no sorry, twenty-seven verses plus prose introduction and prose conclusion, and just looking through it did occur to me that there's quite a lot of material here. I hope we're going to be able to get through this sutta in two sessions. You might be thinking, well it's very, very short, just three pages, we might finish it in an hour, but no, one probably could spend a week on it. But anyway, we've got just two mornings and we'll try to bring out just the main points. So would someone like to read the prose introduction? Read the prose introduction straight through and then we'll discuss it.

Dharmavira: "Thus have I heard ... And the Master spake thus."

S: So that's the introduction. Well, there's quite a lot to be said about that. To begin with, what is a fire worshipper?

Darren: A Shaivite isn't it?

S: No.

Dharmapriya: Agni, a worshipper of Agni?

S: Yes it's a worshipper of Agni and fire worship, ceremonial fire worship, was part of the ancient pre-Buddhistic, Vedic religion. The fire god Agni is one of [3] the most important gods mentioned in the Rig Veda. There are many hymns to Agni in the Rig Veda. The Rig Veda being the first and most important of the four Vedas which make up the ancient Hindu scriptures, and of course you all know what a Brahmin is. A Brahmin is a member of the priestly caste of Hindu society, Hindu society being divided into four main castes. There are about two thousand or more sub-castes but there are four main castes; the Brahmins or priests, the kshatriyas or warriors, the vaisyas or traders and cultivators, and the sudras or serfs. The outcastes of course are outside the caste system altogether, they're not even serfs, they're even lower than that.

Lalitaratna: There are subdivisions in the outcastes as well.

S: Oh yes indeed, yes there are many different ... some of them are more outcastes than others. Some are untouchable, some of them are unseeable. This system, of course, continues right down to the present day.

Dharmapriya: I was surprised to see outcaste, but the word vasala is not one used in modern India.

S: No. We're going into the meaning of the term vasala shortly. It does not literally mean outcaste.

Dharmapriya: Because I thought that the modern type of outcaste were quite a bit later than the Buddha's day and the development was ...

S: Well the term outcaste itself is an English term, I don't think there's anything really corresponding to that in India. Anyway, some of the Brahmins were especially worshippers of Agni. So how was the worship of Agni performed? It was performed usually by offering oblations, very often of ghee or clarified butter, in a fire to the accompaniment of Vedic mantras, that is to say verses from the Veda which were recited. The rules governing the fire sacrifice which [4] was called homa, were very, very elaborate indeed. You had to build a special sort of altar, you had to use a special kind of wood, you lit the fire with special mantras and then you made offerings of ghee, of clarified butter, and other things, pouring it into the sacred fire and there was a point in the whole ceremony where you made the oblations, especially of ghee, with various long spoons, long-handled spoons. So it would seem from this account that Bharadvaja had reached a point in the ceremony where he was holding the sacrificial spoon aloft, this long spoon with the oblation, he was just going to pour the oblation into the fire when along came the Buddha. I imagine, this is not stated, that Bharadvaja was performing this in the courtyard of his house. It's very unlikely that he'd be performing the fire sacrifice inside the house, for obvious reasons. You probably know that Indian houses, especially the old type, have a large courtyard which can be closed at night very often. So he, I imagine, was celebrating this fire sacrifice in the courtyard of his house and then looking out over the low wall he could see the Buddha coming along on his daily alms round. So he wasn't very pleased to see the Buddha because Brahmins were not very favourably disposed to those who did not follow the Vedic tradition. In the Buddha's day there were many individuals and also groups of individuals who had given up the Vedic

tradition, who did not follow, so to speak, what afterwards became known as orthodox Hinduism, did not observe the caste system, did not marry, just wandered from place to place. The Brahmins regarded them as heterodoxers, anti-Vedic and so on, and they were certainly not very sympathetic towards them. So, not only that, but even the sight of one of these yellow robed people, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, was regarded as inauspicious, as bringing bad luck. Among orthodox Brahmins, even today, they tend to regard the sight of a sadhu, of a holy man who's given up the world, as not very auspicious, unless he happens to be a Brahmin, because some Brahmins, later on, they also started following these non-Vedic traditions. So you could imagine that here was Bharadvaja, he'd reached perhaps the crucial moment in his sacrifice, the spoon was raised aloft, he was just going to make the offering, then he sees this inauspicious sight of this wanderer, this recluse, this non-Vedic religious person. 50 he's quite annoyed, and he wants him to keep clear of the [5] sacrifice. He doesn't want him polluting the proceedings with his presence. He doesn't want him to come any nearer, so the "Brahmin Bharadvaja saw him some way off, as he came along, and called to him, saying: 'Hi' you shaveling' Hi' you little recluse' Be off, you outcaste!'" The Pali scriptures represent the Brahmins as often speaking very rudely to the non-Brahmin religious people, non-vedic religious people. The shaveling is 'mundaka', it's quite an insulting way of speaking - bald-head, bald-pate, shaveling. "Little recluse" is 'shramana'. If we want to indicate contempt in English we add a diminutive to a word, you see what I mean? - you little so and so, or, instead of, say, man, manikin and so on. Then he says, "Be off, you outcaste". Now outcaste is 'vasala'. 'Vasala' means literally little man, a manikin you might say, so that's someone of little worth. So the word 'vasala' from meaning simply little man in those days, unimportant man, came to mean low man, despicable man or even outcaste. You see what I mean? Hence the translation. So here's someone unworthy, someone despicable, not a real man, someone not worth considering a man, someone almost subhuman. Do you get the idea? So this is the sort of background. Perhaps I should say a few words about the Buddha also. This all takes place at Sravasti. Some of our friends recently have visited Sravasti, there's some slides which are going to be shown depicting Sravasti. This was a great town, or city, in north-western India, in the Buddha's day. It's not very far from Delhi, well, some hundreds of miles from Delhi, and it was a very, very busy city in the Buddha's day, it was the capital city of the state of Kusala and the Buddha had a vihara, or we might say retreat centre, situated just a couple of miles outside the city, a pleasant, quiet place and he used to go into Sravasti for alms everyday. Though in fact he had two settlements in that area and one had been donated by Anathapindika so it was called Anathapindika's Park, and there was a grove there called Jeta Grove which was named after a prince called Jeta. So the Buddha spent many rainy seasons there. You know there was this ancient custom in the Buddha's day of the wanderers not wandering during the rainy season and the Buddhist wanderers, who afterwards became known as bhikkhus, they also followed this practice. For eight or nine months of the year they wandered from place to place, from town to town, village to village, begging their way and teaching. Also practising meditation whenever they found [6] a quiet place, under a tree or in a cave or a grove, but wandering. But then for three or four months of the year they just stayed in one place, because during the rainy season you just can't wander about, it's not even good for one's health. So the Buddha also followed this practice and his followers, his disciples. He wandered, teaching for eight or nine months of the year and then for three months he stayed in one place. Certain places he stayed in more than once, where he had perhaps more followers than in other places or where a pavilion or a retreat centre had been provided for him. So Sravasti was one of the places where he stayed very, very often. He stayed in fact more often there than in any other place and according to calculations of ancient commentators who went through the Pali texts, he stayed or he spent no less than

twenty-eight rainy season retreats at Sravasti, so it was, so to speak, one of his favourite places. He was very well known there, he had many followers there. But he still followed a very simple life-style. There was not much in the way of cooking arrangements in these retreat centres, the monks, including the Buddha, used to go out everyday into the city and just gather food, just go from house to house with their begging bowl and collect enough for the day, then go back to the vihara, eat, have a little rest, spend the day meditating, discussing, teaching and so on. That was their life. So this is the introduction to the sutta proper, to the Buddha's teaching, it just gives us a glimpse of the sort of way of life. "Thus have I heard" - it's supposed to be Ananda speaking. It's supposed to be Ananda, according to tradition, reciting everything that he'd ever heard about the Buddha's teaching at the first council after the Buddha's death. Ananda says: "Thus have I heard:- Once, when the Master was dwelling near Sravasti in Anathapindika's Park at Jeta Grove, he dressed early in the morning and took bowl and robe and entered Sravasti for alms. Now at that time the Brahmin Bharadvaja, a fire-worshipper, was tending the sacrificial fire in his house, and had raised the oblation aloft. And the Master, going from house to house, came to the Brahmin's abode. And Brahmin Bharadvaja saw him some way off, as he came along, and called to him, saying: 'Hi you shaveling' Hi' you little recluse! Be off, you [7] outcaste" At these words the Master said to him: 'But do you know an outcaste, Brahmin, and the things that make an outcaste?' So here we come to the beginning of the teaching. The rest is all introduction, setting the scene, and it gives a very vivid picture of life in the Buddha's day. This is one of the great merits, one of the great advantages of the Pali scriptures. In the Mahayana scriptures you get magnificent descriptions of archetypal realms

usually - Pure Lands and Buddha realms and all the rest. But in the Pali scriptures you get pictures of what things were actually like in the Buddha's own day and what you might have encountered had you been around at that time and had actually seen the Buddha or seen Sariputra or seen Moggallana. You get very, very vivid pictures not only of the religious life at the time but the social and economic and even military life of the time. So we get a glimpse of that sort here. So, "At these words the Master said to him: 'But do you know an outcaste, Brahmin, and the things that make an outcaste?'" What is the first thing you notice about the Buddha's response?

Keith: He doesn't reply in kind, he just ...

S: He doesn't reply in kind. He doesn't react. He's been abused, he's been insulted, but there's no reaction. He doesn't react to being called a shaveling, a bald-pate, a little recluse or a sort of worthless person, virtually an outcaste. There's no reaction to that, he simply says: "Do you know an outcaste, Brahmin, and the things that make an outcaste?" What's the significance of that reply? There's a very important principle it introduces. Something quite simple really.

Lalitaratna: He asks a question.

S: He asks a question, yes.

Vajrananda: If the Brahmin doesn't know what he is, why is he telling him to go, for instance.

[8]

S: But even more fundamentally than that. You're on the right track but sort of go back.

Dharmavira: He sets up a communication between them doesn't he.

S: Yes, he sets up a communication. But there's something even more basic. A point that he's raising, a very general point, which is staring us in the face. Well, he's raising the point ... the question he's asking really is: do we always know the meaning of the words that we use? This is a very basic point isn't it? Because in this case the Brahmin is using the word 'vasala'. The Buddha has probably picked on that word because it is the most insulting. He's using the word 'vasala', outcaste, but does he know the meaning of that word? Does he even know what he is saying? So the Buddha is making the point that very often we use words, especially when we speak to other people, speaking about other people, describing other people, judging other people, without knowing really what we are saying. So do you see the general significance of that point? So why should we do this? I mean, what makes us do this?

Keith: To save us thinking too deeply.

S: Yes, to save us thinking too deeply. I mean, the words are current, we've got some idea of what they mean, we think we know what they mean, but we haven't a really clear, precise, a very definite idea. We haven't really thought about the words. So we don't really consider whether the words are applicable in any given case, we just come up with them, we just blurt them out, very often in a very reactive fashion.

Vajrananda: People like to be able to explain everything away (...)

S: Yes. I mean, we've used the word reactive, but sometimes people use this word itself. They say, 'Oh, you're just being reactive'. So one makes a point, maybe [9] it's a good point, a valid point, but instead of considering that point, one says, 'you're just being reactive'. So one might respond in the Buddha's way and say; 'Well, do you really know what being reactive means? You seem to be just using mechanical sort of way. Do you know the meaning of the word reactive this word in Another word I've found people using in this really loose sort of way is 'prejudiced' Have you ever noticed this, the way people use the word prejudiced? They use the word often quite wrongly. If you say something with which they disagree they will say, 'oh, you are prejudiced'. But what does prejudiced mean? Have you got any idea?

Vajrananda: Judging before.

S: So, judging before what?

Vajrananda: Consideration.

S: What, judging before consideration? Judging before seeing the evidence etc. etc. Supposing you have thought about the matter, supposing you have considered the evidence and then you speak, can you be regarded as prejudiced? Even if you happen to be wrong, you cannot be regarded as prejudiced. But what often happens, I find, that if people don't like what you say, they disagree with what you say they don't try to ... they don't bother to refute your arguments or produce new evidence, they just say, 'Oh, you're prejudiced'. If you put forward any sort of unfamiliar, unfashionable, uncurrent, untrendy view, 'Oh, you're just prejudiced' is what people say. They don't know what it means, they don't know what the word means. So they're just using it in this loose sort of emotive fashion. And there's a lot of this sort of thing goes on. Do you see what I'm getting at? They don't know the meaning of

the word that they use. So this is what the Buddha is getting at - know the meaning of the words that you use, especially what we might call these loaded words.

[10]

Vajrananda: It's often in defence isn't it?

S: Yes, it's beside the point very often. Sometimes, as the Buddha does here, you can deal with that defensiveness just by asking the person; 'Well, do you know the meaning of the word that you're using? The worst of all you have called me a vasala, do you know what a vasala is? Do you know the things that make a vasala?' So if someone says to you; 'Oh you're prejudiced', you can say; 'Well, do you know the meaning of the word? no you know the etymology of the word?' That would throw them. (laughter) Because very often they don't know the meaning of the word when they say 'oh you're prejudiced', it really means 'oh I disagree with you, I don't like what you're saying'. But they consider it also an absolute refutation of what you said if they can fasten the label of 'prejudiced' on you. So this is a very important point that the Buddha raises, or that the Buddha makes. You should know the meaning of the words that you use. "But do you know an outcaste, Brahmin, and the things that make an outcaste?" So you see the Buddha, so to speak, hits the nail right on the head. He doesn't waste any time discussing this and that, he goes straight to the point and he asks a question. He pulls the Brahmin up short. You can just imagine him standing there with his sacrificial spoon raised aloft as the Buddha comes back with this question - his mouth sort of gapes open. He's probably really taken aback and he says "No, indeed, Master Gotama. I know not an outcaste nor the things that make an outcaste. It were well for me if Easter Gotama were to teach me so that I may know these things". So there's a complete change of attitude on his part. How do you think that that could have come about? I mean, I commented yesterday, with regard to Ratnaguna's talk on Sariputra, how quickly things seemed to happen in those days. How quickly you understood the Dhamma, how quickly you attained stream-entry, even how quickly you were ordained apparently; almost on the spot. Things don't seem to happen so quickly nowadays for one reason or another.

Vajrananda: Perhaps he was quite a well known teacher, the Buddha.

[11]

S: It could be.

Vajrananda: To some degree he already knew of him

S: Yes, it's quite possible because after all the Brahmin lived in Sravasti and the Buddha often stayed nearby.

Vajrananda: It seems the first thing he says there is more like a reaction to anybody in a yellow robe.

S: Yes. He may not have realized it was the Buddha. He may not have looked very closely, he may have seen him in the relative distance.

Vajrananda: Didn't see the stripes' (laughter)

Bernie: It says that he saw him a way off and started yelling at him from a distance.

Dharmapriya: Maybe another reason was that the Buddha's reply was ... you said it sort of hit the nail on the head, you might say emotionally or psychologically as well. If you are going to argue with someone and not just re-enforce your opinion or try to convince a bystander, it's like you really have to go to the root of that person's point of view, which seems to be what the Buddha's actually doing, which is why he's really shaken this man, because maybe being an orthodox Brahmin he has quite a rigid view. The Buddha's launched a question right at the basis of this view.

S: There's also the point that there is a sort of curriculum of Brahminical studies, the Vedungas, the branches of the Vedas, and one of these of course was etymology. If the Brahmin had studied these things, well, as a Brahmin he would be expected to know, expected to understand the meanings of words, the etymologies of words. So in a way the Buddha is questioning whether really he understands [12] the things that a Brahmin is supposed to understand and whether he has studied properly what a Brahmin is supposed to have studied. In other words, what sort of Brahmin is he? He's using words without knowing their meaning. There could be a suggestion of that sort. Also there is perhaps to be considered the fact that the Buddha did not just react. To begin with he wasn't intimidated, he wasn't cowed and don't forget Brahmins were expected to boss people, you find this in India still. They're not used to people answering back. They have a generally recognized high position in society, just Brahmins as Brahmins - Brahmins by birth. They're not used therefore to people answering them back. Things have changed a bit in modern times but only quite recently. So first of all he was surprised that the Buddha wasn't intimidated by this abuse, and Brahmins were quite accustomed to abusing people of other castes and communities and traditions, and also perhaps he was surprised that, or even impressed by the fact that the Buddha didn't react. He didn't become angry. He responded, he responded quite positively, but very, very powerfully, with this question which perhaps did really shake that Brahmin very, very seriously. So he realized he wasn't up against any ordinary shaveling, not just any ordinary wanderer in a yellow robe. He may not have known, or he might have known, that it was the Buddha. but certainly he was no ordinary person. He'd been challenged, he'd met his match and he knew it. He implicitly acknowledges that; "It were well for me if Master Gotama were to teach me so that I may know these things". Before he called him shaveling and little recluse and outcaste, now he calls him Master Gotama. Let me see what the word is that they have translated as master - bho. Clearly he has recognized him and he addresses him bho Gotama. Bho is a polite term which Brahmins generally use, or used, in addressing one another. You see what I mean? So he addresses the Buddha politely as though he was another Brahmin.

Vajrananda: It just struck me ... when I've read these things before you often think it's impossible that somebody could turn around quite so quickly but maybe it's just the way that we experience ourselves. Maybe it's possible to be that adjustable.

[13]

S: Also I mean it's not just a question of people turning around but also of being turned around and one can be turned around if someone is very positive. I was going to say very strong, but not strong in the sense of exerting force or compulsion, but if you yourself are not strong in what you believe, strong in your views, your right views, if you don't speak with real conviction, how are you going to turn around other people? It's hardly possible. You've got to be really convinced in your own mind, really strong in your own mind. You must speak effectively without any reactivity but really knowing and understanding what you are saying and that can have a very strong effect upon people.

Vajrananda: That also suggests that the Brahmin wasn't afraid of that definite, direct communication whereas a lot of people would just push away if you come on like that.

S: Yes. It seems as though he was ready. We are told by some accounts that the Buddha used to sit in the morning and just consider who he could meet and teach during the day. We are told he used to sit in his little vihara and look around with his divine vision. Well, one may take that literally or not but he had the sort of intention of encountering somebody, even going to see somebody, introducing the Dhamma to them. So it may have been that that morning he thought. 'Ah ha, there is that Brahmin, yes, he'll be performing his fire sacrifice about this time, so if I just happen to stop by on my way around Sravasti it could be that something happens'. So that the Buddha might have had some expectation of that encounter. That is not impossible. It's said that he used to keep his eye open, whether it's his divine eye or not, he used to keep his eye open, so to speak, for people who were ready for the teaching, ready for the Dhamma, who were receptive. So he could well have gone that way, passed the Brahmin Bharadvaja's house, that morning quite intentionally.

Bernie: It seems like he has had contact with him before, like he does the same round Probably.

[14]

S: Could be.

Bernie: Visits the same people, especially as the guy calls him by his name.

Darren: Concerning the point that Bharadvaja's changing of emotion, which seems quite rapid, perhaps there was ... like when we read it we read through and we think, well, the Buddha said this then Bharadvaja said that and the Buddha said that back, but perhaps there was a few minutes between Bharadvaja's first retort, 'Hi shaveling', and then perhaps the Buddha, who was still some distance off, came up and there may have been some non-verbal ...

S: Well yes, you can just imagine Bharadvaja ... I mean he's shouted out to this little recluse to stay away, to keep clear but then he sees he's not taking any notice, he sees he's coming nearer and nearer. So he can be quite impressed by that, wells who is this? He's not taking any notice of me, he's ignoring my shout. You can just imagine sort of looking and looking and the spoon drops, maybe his wife comes out to have a look too and then the Buddha comes nearer and nearer and he says well, yes that's that teacher Gotama, that's Master Gotama. So you can imagine him getting a bit uneasy that something is going to happen. Then the Buddha comes across, puts his head over the wall, and he says well, you've called me a vasala, an outcaste, do you know what it means, do you know what the word means? So the Brahmin at that stage can be quite confused and uneasy and he says well no, please tell me. You see, so it might have happened much more dramatically than it's suggested by these words. You often find that. I mean, just to give a minor example or illustration, I really noticed when editing transcriptions of lectures and seminars that there is such a difference between what is just on the printed or typed page and what you hear on the tape. It's as though a whole big, even important dimension is missing when you've just got the written or the printed word. So we must bear that in mind here, even to a greater extent, that yes, we've got the words of the Buddha, yes we've got the words of Bharadvaja, yes we've got a description of the scene, but there's nonetheless a whole dimension missing that [15] we would have experienced had we

been there on the spot in that situation at that time. So we must remember that when we read any of the scriptures, in fact any of the Pali texts or Sanskrit or Tibetan texts or Chinese texts - that there's something missing. 'There's something that the mere written and printed word, however good, doesn't convey. I mean that we have to supply, as it were, from our own experience if we are to understand the text properly. We've got to feel our way through to that unexpressed dimension which is there, so to speak, in the background of the written word, the printed page. There's so much that's been left out, and unavoidably left out, even the greatest writer, the greatest poet could not have communicated that. So we've got to recreate it for ourselves, at least to some extent, out of our own experience, out of our own reflections on the texts and what they mean, f-or our own discussion.

So Be says: "No indeed, Master Gotama, I know not an outcaste nor the things that make an outcaste. It were well for me if Master Gotama were to teach me so that I may know these things". So what does this suggest, or even make quite clear? I mean, what has Bharadvaja understood from the Buddha's question? He has not only understood, he suddenly realized that he didn't know the meaning of the word he had so unthinkingly used. Not only has he realized that, he has realized, or he suspects, that the Buddha knows. So he's learned, so to speak, or realized two things at once: that he didn't know the meaning of the word that he was using, he's brought up against that realization and he knows that the Buddha in all likelihood does know the meaning.

Vajrananda: Is it that he doesn't understand the meaning of the word or that he doesn't ... he hasn't thought about the context he was using it in?

S: Well, he hasn't even understood the meaning of the word because 'do you know an outcaste', can you really see who is an outcaste? Can you really see where the word is applicable? The things that make an outcaste? You don't really know. The Buddha goes on to describe an outcaste so this suggests that the Brahmin was using the word unthinkingly without a clear idea of what the term really meant.

[16]

Its just a general term of abuse. So it's know an outcaste in the sense of knowing.

SIDE 2

S: The actual Pali says not do you know an outcaste but do you know 'outcaste'. That is to say, we put it in inverted commas so that, do you know outcaste', do you know this word, do you know the meaning of this word? Do you know what you are talking about? He admits that he doesn't and the fact that he asks the Buddha to explain the matter to him suggests that he realizes that the Buddha does know what he's talking about, does know the meaning of the word. So, "Then listen Brahmin, give heed to what is well. I will speak" So you notice the Buddha says listen, he's got to really take in what the Buddha says and he says "give heed to what is well" - manasikaroli, apply your mind, the word is sadhuka, the same word we shout three times, sadhu, sadhu, sadhu. Apply your mind to that which is good. So the Buddha says two things: listen, just be receptive to what I says and apply your mind to what is good, suggesting that formerly he was not applying his mind very well or very much to what was good. The mere fact that he could abuse the Buddha in that way shows that. So the Brahmin fire-worshipper says, "Yes, sir.

Lalitaratna: He has an integrity, the Brahmin.

S: Yes.

Lalitaratna: He does. I was thinking of Sariputra and his friend last night., that they go ... that their teacher may be limited, but that they work with that.

S: One does find that. I've known many Brahmins in India. One might say ... I mean, I've described some of them in my memoirs. In a way, though you disagreed with them most, the strictest were the best. The narrow-minded ones were the best [17] in a way because though the teaching that they followed was very limited, they followed it very strictly and very thoroughly and even, one might say, sincerely, despite their mixture of caste pride and feeling of superiority and all the rest of it and it did give them a definite character and it was, in a way, though maybe in a slightly perverted way, a preparation for hearing the Buddha's teaching. They'd followed a certain path, however limited, quite strictly. They were accustomed to discipline, to regularity. These things are quite important.

Keith: There might even be a parallel in this country. I know of one person who was in the Church of Unification and as soon as he came across Buddhism, he got very much involved.

S: Well, one of our friends went so far as to say that he thought that if someone had spent a few years in the army, he himself had spent a few years in the army, well, that was an excellent preparation for Buddhism. (laughter) Because, he said, you learned to live in a community and you also appreciated the importance of discipline. (more laughter) This was one of our slightly older Order members. (laughter) Anyway, any further points arising out of that little prose introduction? The scene has been set for the teaching that the Buddha now gives. Anyway, would someone like to read the first verse of the Buddha's reply?

v.116 "The evil, angry man,
Man of ill-will and cant,
Deceitful base in view:
Know him as outcaste vile"

S: The Pali from now on remember is in verses and the meter is quite strong one might say. I don't know what the technical term would be but there's a very emphatic beat to the verse. I'll read you this verse in Pali so you get some idea, the Buddha says: "Kodhana upanahi ca papamakkhi ca yo naro [18] vipannaditthi mayavi, tam janna vasalo iti."

That's the man you should know as a vasala' This is very, very powerful, very emphatic, the English is very weak in comparison. It's a real sort of hammer blow or a series of hammer blows. It sounds like that in the Pali: "Kodhana ... vasalo iti'!. A very powerful statement that must have, you know, knocked the Brahmin off his feet.

Lalitaratna: (laughter) Did he have a staff at the time? (general laughter)

S: Anyway, let's go through this, let's refer to the Pali text because the English translation rather reverses the order of some of these adjectives. Kodhana is the angry man, the man given to anger. Why do you think the Buddha mentions anger first? That the vasala, the real outcaste, is the man who is angry, the angry man, the wrathful man? Why does he mention

that first?

Keith: Is it simply because that was the reaction of Bharadvaja?

S: Yes, that was the reaction of Bharadvaja, he became angry and because he became angry, he felt angry, he abused the Buddha. He felt angry because here was this non-Vedic, even anti-Vedic, person approaching just as he was about to offer his oblation in the fire. So this made him angry. So kodhana - the Buddha is drawing attention to that. What he is saying is directly relevant to that particular Brahmin. He is, in a way, I mean, this will become fully apparent in the course of the Buddha's discourse, he is saying, you know, you are the vasala, you are the real little man, you are the real despicable person, you are the real outcaste, you are the vasala, the angry person, you became angry. Anger, wrath, this is one of the characteristics of the real outcaste. So from the very first word the Buddha is really pinning him down. The Buddha is really compelling him, obliging him to see himself as he really is. So kodhana, the angry man, he is the vasala. Oh, there is perhaps a second reason why the Buddha mentioned anger first. Very often you get lobha, dvesa and moha, that is greed or craving, and then hatred or anger, and ignorance, but there is a reason why kodhana could be mentioned first [19] in order of importance, that is as the most unskilful of all unskilful mental states. Can you think why that might be? Though this might be going a little into the Mahayana so to speak.

Lalitaratna: I've heard it said that this is the most un-Bodhisattva-like quality.

S Yes. I think Shantideva does make this point, or the sutras from which he quotes make this point, that, as you've said, hatred for other beings is the most un-Bodhisattva-like of all the unskilful mental states, because what are you aspiring to do as a Bodhisattva? To help others, to help lead them to Enlightenment How can you possibly do that if you hate them? It is directly against the Bodhisattva Vows directly against the Bodhisattva ideal. That kind of anger and hatred, aversion to other living beings is the absolute antithesis of the maitri and karuna that the Bodhisattva is supposed, above everything else, to develop. So perhaps one might say, from a somewhat Mahayana point of view, that's the reason why the Buddha mentions kodhana first. how would you define kodha? We're calling it anger, but I sometimes make a distinction between hatred and anger. Are you aware of this distinction? What is it would you say?

Dharmavira: It's less unskilful than hatred really.

S: But in what does that difference of degree consist?

Keith: Is anger where there is something definitely objective that needs to be changed, that's wrong, whereas hatred is just subjectively ... well, just a reaction

S: Well one can draw a distinction of that kind, but that wasn't what I had in mind.

Dharmapriya: There's an active element, almost of malevolence, in hatred, of wishing to do harm, whether conscious or not, whereas in anger that's lacking, [20] or should be.

S: Yes, in hatred, in kodha, there is an element of destructiveness, which isn't there, at least to the same degree in anger. One might say that ... well just ask yourself, I mean, how do you

feel when you just get angry with someone? And how do you feel when you really hate someone? There is a difference.

Dharmapriya: There's quite a different colour, or feel, to it, actually.

S: I mean anger is what you experience, or what you tend to experience, when someone just gets in your way, when they're blocking you, they're checking you. They're obstructing your energy, so your energy builds up so there's a bit of an explosion. You don't really want to do them any harm. You just want them out of your way. You see What I mean?

Bernie: Frustration, yes.

S: Yes, that's anger, so that is less unskilful, but hatred is when there's a sort of settled aversion for someone. They may not be actually getting in your way, at least not objectively, except perhaps in some subtle, round-about way, that they may not even be aware of, but you really don't like them at all. You really would like to do them harm, to destroy them, even kill them. You brood upon it and think about it. This is more like hatred.

Vajrananda: It's almost as if hatred comes from you, whereas anger is sort of almost the situation, the communication or lack of communication between two people.

S: Hmm. Yes. It is quite possible to get angry with someone and then after you've got angry with them, well, it's out of the way. I mean, you're good friends again. But in the case of hatred, no such thing is possible.

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Bernie: I can see how it's karmically heavier because of the sort of awareness involved with hatred. You're quite aware of what you're doing. So it's going to have a lot more weight karmically.

S: Yes. So kodha would seem to be nearer to hatred in English than to anger. So the vasala is someone who is angry or hateful. You know, full of hate. Then "upanahi" - the real meaning is grudge. Grudge, is upanahi. Chalmers translates it as rancour. Upanahi is more like hatred which goes on festering in the mind. It's a further stage. Do you see what I mean?

Vajrananda: It consumes you.

S: It consumes you. It burns you.

Dharmapriya: It's beginning to build up, really, a picture of someone who's departing from reality, as it were, the objective, more and more.

S: Yes, yes.

Vajrananda: So it seems you can be committed to hatred almost sort of feud going with someone. You can be even

S: Oh yes, you can have engaged in a vendetta. I mean the vendetta is a characteristic of some parts of Italy even today. Vendettas are handed down from father to son. Have you read

about these things? Sometimes hundreds of people are killed in these family feuds. So, the Buddha is making it clear that the real vasala, the real outcaste, is, well, a very, very unskilful type of person indeed. The word vasala itself has, as we might say, a very heavy sort of meaning. It's not a word to be used lightly or unthinkingly, in the way that the Brahmin used it. So, "Kodhana upanahi ca papamakkhi". Papamakkhi seems to have a double meaning in Pali. Here it's translated simply as evil, but that's not enough. 'Papa' is [22] evil, yes, but 'makkhi' has two meanings. Makkhi can mean harsh. So papamakkhi is someone who's not just evil, but who is evil in a harsh and rough sort of way. Do you see what I mean? And this certainly goes along with his being angry and resentful and bearing a grudge. But makkhi can also mean concealing. So concealing evil, it can also mean that. So there's a double meaning. The vasala, the outcaste is, one might say, a roughly or harshly evil person, but also an evil person who conceals his evil. But both of these senses apply to the Brahmin, because he was indulging in rough, harsh language towards the Buddha.

Bernie: He saw himself. in a way, as being superior to the Buddha.

S: Yes. But do you see the distinction between being roughly evil and being evil in a sort of quiet and more sophisticated, even more civilized sort of way? I mean, you can be just as evil even though you're smooth-spoken and smiling and have got nice manners. Sometimes that disguises the fact that you really are evil. But you can also be roughly evil, harshly evil in a way that makes it obvious to everybody that you are being evil, that you are evil.

Vajrananda: You say he's also concealing his evil. Could that be to do with him being self-righteous?

S: Yes. Because he was a Brahmin, performing a religious ceremony, making offerings to the fire god. But there must have been a lot of pent-up anger and resentment. Maybe he didn't like these wanderers, maybe he didn't like these, from his point of view, heterodox religious people. He burst out when he saw the Buddha at that particular moment or saw this yellow-clad figure in the distance at that particular moment, so maybe he wasn't the pious person that he looked. So that meaning of papamakkhi, meaning one who conceals his evil, is also applicable to the Brahmin. So, "Kodhana upanahi papamakkhi ca yo naro" - all these powerful adjectives, so to speak, that man who is angry, bears a grudge, who is harshly evil or conceals his evil. That man, there's a few more adjectives to come. Vipannaditthi - ditthi of course means view or outlook or philosophy. Vipanna [23] means gone wrong in or failing. One who has gone wrong in his view, gone wrong in his outlook, even gone wrong in his philosophy. Do you see what I mean? So clearly this applies to the Brahmin too. The Buddha says you're following the wrong path, this Vedic path of yours with sacrifices and mantras and oblations, which doesn't even give you any sort of moral teaching or moral training, which can leave you angry and abusive. You see?

Vajrananda: Would there be no ethical training in that teaching at all?

S: Not in the Buddhist sense. The ethical training would certainly not include being polite to wanderers. I mean, yes there was a certain amount of ethical training but it still left them with a definite feeling of caste superiority that the Brahmins were the best people. You are a Brahmin because you were born of Brahmin parents. So vipannaditthi is gone wrong in one's views, with a distorted outlook, gone astray as regards one's views, one's basic philosophy. And then mayavi, that means deceitful.

Dharmavira: Is that as in Maya's dance?

S: It's the same word. Maya means a sort of magical display as when you're made to see something that isn't really there, hence being deceitful. So why is the vasala, and by implication the Brahmins described as deceitful?

Bernie: It's all coming out when he's being religious, stronger than ever, when he's performing his religious rites.

S: Yes. So "Kodhana upanahi ca papamakkhi ca yo naro vipannaditthi mayavi, tam janna vasalo iti"; tam - that, janna - know. Know that kind of person as a vasala. Know that kind of person as an outcaste. And the Buddha will repeat this as a refrain at the end of every verse; "tam janna vasalo iti". So the Buddha gets off to a very good start. (laughter) He gives him a really good rap over the [24] knuckles and this doesn't quite square -with the picture of the Buddha as someone very calm and quiet and meek. The Buddha can also be quite strong it seems, can be very outspoken. But we must bear in mind that though the Buddha's language is strong, it's not the strength of reactivity, it's not the strength of force in the ordinary sense. We mustn't forget that the Buddha must have been speaking to Bharadvaja out of great compassion and with a great desire for his welfare. Perhaps he has gone to his house with that specifically in mind, to help him, to teach him the Dhamma. So though he is speaking so strongly it is without any sort of passion or any unskilful mental state in the ordinary sense.

Vajrananda: Presumably it wouldn't necessarily be a sort of conscious way he'd

be doing it ... well, he's very emotionally sort of contacted. He sees this person going all wrong, he almost gets angry.

S: Yes, you could put it in that way. If there is such a thing as positive anger, well it could arise in this way. If there was such a thing as positive anger, well, it would be appropriate in this sort of situation. You're almost outraged by the sheer unskilfulness of something which you see somebody doing.

Bernie: Vajrapani looks angry and people say, oh he's evil or he looks evil.

S: Yes. anyway would someone like to read that next verse.

v.117 "Know him as outcaste too
Who harms a bird or beast
Or any creature here,
And mercy shows to none:"

S: Yes:

"Ekajam va dijam va pi yo'dha panani himsati
yassa pane daya n'atthi, tam janna vasalo iti."

There's an interesting thing here, the Buddha describes as an outcaste one who, [25] in the words of Hare's translation, harms a bird or beast. Now what are the words for bird and beast? You might think this is a very small point but perhaps it isn't. "Ekajam va dijam"; ekajam

means once-born and dijam means twice-born. 50 which is which? Is it the animal which is once-born or is it the bird that is once-born? Is it the animal which is twice-born or is it the bird that is twice born?

Bernie: I think it's the bird, not thinking too much about it. It's born once as an egg and then as a chicken.

S: Right yes. (general laughter and 'ahhhs')

Lalitaratna: Clever isn't it?

S: You see first the mother bird gives birth to the egg, that's the first birth. Then the little bird, the fledgling, breaks, hatches from the egg, that's the second birth. So in Pali what we call animal is called once-born because it's torn straight from the womb and what we call bird is called twice-born - that is one of the words for bird - because it undergoes this double birth. So a vasala is one who injures beast or bird or other living thing. But we're not quite finished with this once-torn and twice-born. Did not the Brahmins describe themselves as twice-born? Did they not? Well yes they did actually. They described themselves as trice-born in comparison with members of other castes who were only once-born. Though perhaps I should add a qualification here. Originally it was the three higher castes - the Brahmins, the kshatriyas and the vaisyas - who were regarded as twice-born. The lower caste was only once-born, the untouchables and outcastes, of course, well, they were hardly born at all. They were hardly human. So, you know, what was the Brahminical sense of being twice-born? When did that second birth take place?

Bernie: It must have been some ritual When they reached manhood.

[26]

S: Yes, that's right. It was the ceremony of investment with the sacred thread. What we call the sacred thread is, well it has a long history, but it seems to have been associated with manhood and the ability to perform Vedic rites of a certain kind. Yajna means a sacrifice and yajna pavitam is sacrificial thread. What we call sacred thread in English should really be sacrificial thread. So it is a sign that you've been taught the Vedas and you are qualified - you've been taught the mantras of the Vedas, you are qualified to perform Vedic ceremonies, Vedic rites, using those Vedic mantras. So as a sign of your sort of having graduated, so to speak, in Vedic study you are invested with a sacred thread which you wear across your body. It's made in a certain way. Originally the kshatriyas and the vaisyas were also invested but as the centuries went by the Brahmins gradually restricted it to their own caste. So nowadays in India usually only Brahmins wear sacred threads though occasionally you meet kshatriyas and even vaisyas who also wear sacred threads but that is much rarer. They wear a different kind of thread anyway, not quite the same thread as a Brahmin wears. I think it's not quite so thick or something like that. So, of course, it did eventually happen that a Brahmin, that is to say the son of Brahmin parents, when he was sixteen years of age was automatically invested with the sacred thread even though he didn't know any Vedic mantras at all and couldn't perform Vedic ceremonies. It just became a sign of social position, social status, social superiority. It became a rather empty thing and this is one of the things that the Buddha often criticized, that the Brahmins of his day were not true Brahmins. They wore the sacred thread, perhaps they even knew Vedic mantras, perhaps they could even perform Vedic ceremonies, but what was supposed to be the real end of the Vedic teaching, that is to say union with

Brahma, they hadn't done, so they were not true Brahmins. So to come back to this once-born and twice-born of the text, you could say that it doesn't refer just to birds and beasts but to Brahmins and non-Brahmins or people of different castes.

Bernie: That would be more likely actually.

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S: Anyway; "Ekajam va dijam va pi yo'dha panani himsati". One who practises vehimsati ... you're aware of the word himsa or you're aware of the word ahimsa? Ahimsa is of course non-violence, so himsa is violence. But what about vehimsa? Because here the word is vehimsa. It means extreme violence. It suggests cruelty. It suggests wanton violence, repeated violence, extreme violence. So one ... so it's not just injury, it's cruelty - it's not just harming, it's much stronger than that. So one who behaves with extreme violence to either animals and birds and other living creatures, other breathing creatures literally, or one may translate, one who behaves with extreme violence to human beings, whether Brahmins or non-Brahmins, whether caste Hindus or non-caste Hindus and other living beings. Such a person is a vasala. Such a person is an outcaste. And then of course the Buddha says; "And mercy shows to none". The word for mercy is daya, kindness Who shows no kindness, no compassion to any living being, he is the real vasala, the real outcaste. If one was to put it just in a few words, one of the characteristics of the outcaste is the fact that he behaves with extreme violence to other living beings and he is devoid of compassion. Clearly the Brahmin wasn't exhibiting compassion or kindness to the Buddha, so here also the Buddha's words apparently are striking home.

Dharmapriya: These really do seem to link up with the kodha earlier. It's like, well, He starts off with kodha the very first word ...

S: Yes, that's the mental state.

Dharmapriya: ... and then explicates from it.

S: Here is the outward expression of that in the form of extremely violent actions with regard to other living beings. (Pause) Are you going to ring your little bell? But anyway it is 11.30. I think we could stop just for a few minutes, for a little light refreshment.

TEA BREAK VS-1/28

S: Who's going to dry the dishes?

Darren: I'll go.

v.128 "The noted brigand who
Besieges and lays waste
The villages and towns:"

S: Yes. You notice the translation leaves out this refrain, but the original has this refrain at the end of each verse; "tam janna vasalo iti" - he indeed should be known as the vasala.

Vajrananda: Why are there four lines to the second verse?

S: It's just the translation of some Pali words require more English words to translate and others less.

Vajrananda: So there would be "know him as an outcaste vile" on the end of that as well.

S: Yes. In Pali in each verse there are two long lines with a sort of break in the middle. They could be printed as four lines. We pass on, and you notice the extension of the subject? In the first verse the Buddha was emphasizing mainly the outcaste as an angry man, in the second as a violent man devoid of mercy, in the third a man who brings about a lot of destruction, destruction on a wide scale, who, in the words of this verse, "Besieges and lays waste the villages and towns". That is pretty accurate. He destroys and he besieges villages and towns and is known as an oppressor. Brigand is not quite literal, it's an oppressor a tyrant. Perhaps there's a suggestion of a king who is making war, who is trying to conquer, trying to extend his territory, and who destroys, who desolates towns and villages and who is known as an oppressor and as a tyrant. This is violence on a grand scale. Perhaps the Buddha ...

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Vajrananda: from the social and normal order, fairly natural order

S: Yes.

Dharmapriya: This was really the period of the expanding monarchies.

S: It was indeed, yes. If we look at the Buddha's period during which the Buddha lived from a political point of view we find that the main feature was this; that formerly, or perhaps we could say in the early years of the Buddha's life, there were many different states in that part of India, some large and some small. Quite a lot of the smaller states were republics. The Buddha himself came from a, well, one might say a tribe but that doesn't really convey what I mean, he came from a territory which was perhaps about the size of Wales on the Indo-Tibetan border, and which was organized in a republican way. There was no hereditary monarchy. The community or state was ruled by a community or governing body, so to speak, of elected elders, all of whom had the title of king, a bit like among the Greeks where king didn't mean quite what it means today. So there were many of these small republican states in India at the Buddha's times certainly during the earlier part of his life, but there were also two big monarchical states, there were other monarchical states but two were the biggest, Magadha and Kosala. And they were both expanding and swallowing up the smaller states whether kingdoms or whether republics. And in the Buddha's day the big political question was whether Magadha would swallow up Kosala or whether Kosala would swallow up Magadha. In the end, after the Buddha's death, Magadha swallowed up Kosala, and of course the Magadhan empire expanded into the Ashokan empire. Ashoka inherited this expanded Magadhan monarchy and Ashoka himself extended his territories and governed the greater part of present day India, or India and Pakistan, practically all of it except the extreme south. So maybe this sort of thing was very much in the Buddha's mind. He was very aware of these states, especially these large, powerful monarchical states, trying to expand, trying to increase their territory. Perhaps he's well aware of devastated towns and villages and saw that as a direct expression [30] of an unskilful mental state. So clearly it's very applicable, even today.

Vajrananda: This linking up, this sort of progression from the evil right through to that really does show, you know, that there's no right end to it.

S: Well a simile which is sometimes given is like it's a ball bouncing down a staircase, once you've tossed it on to the topmost step it goes on bouncing down and down until it reaches the bottom. Of course in the case of a human being he can check himself, but it very often requires the interposition of some outside agency at least by way of a reminder. Ashoka's case was very remarkable because Ashoka was expanding the boundaries of his empire and he conquered the people of Kalinga corresponding roughly to present day Orissa, on the east coast of India, and hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered and Ashoka saw this and he himself tells us in his rock edicts that he was overcome with remorse and he decided to change his ways. He had even before that come into contact with Buddhism, he'd come into contact with Buddhist monks. So he changed his whole outlook, he ceased to conquer, he ceased trying to expand his empire and he adopted a different policy, adopted a different principle. So that instead of being called Chandashoka, which meant fierce or cruel Ashoka, he became known as Dhammashoka or righteous Ashoka. So this is quite an extraordinary example of a king who checked himself in this way, and who realized that what he had been doing was wrong, that he was inflicting hardship and extreme suffering upon hundreds of thousands of people and who changed course. That sort of thing on that sort of scale is very, very rare. So there are no terms here in this verse that require any special attention. Chalmers has translated as the wastrel, that's his term for the outcaste, harries and beleaguers folk in town and village where he's called a scourge. So a more literal translation would be that he who attacks and besieges the villages and towns and who is known as an oppressor, a tyrant, know him as an outcaste know him as a vasala. You could say that there's an implied condemnation of war here, especially a war of territorial expansion and aggrandizement.

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So in these verses, in these first three verses of the main body of the sutta, what has the Buddha in fact covered? What particular important principle, or precept?

Dharmavira: don't harm.

S: The first, yes, abstention from harming living beings. All these three verses relate to the first principle, or are an expansion of the first precept.

END OF TAPE ONE

[32]

Vasala Tape 2 side 1

S: ...in terms of psychology, in terms of ethics and in terms of politics.

The mental state, the personal behaviour, the effect in social life when that behaviour is extended into the political field, or into the field of collective life.

Lalitaratna Was there anything of vegetarianism in that bird or beast, Who harms a bird or beast'? Could the Brahman have been vegetarian?

S: No, Brahmana were not vegetarian in those days, they even ate beef.

So yes there could have been a suggestion in favour of what we call vegetarianism. That is to say in favour of let us say a vegetarian diet, rather than in favour of vegetarianism. You see

the point of the distinction?

V: ... I'm not quite sure ...

S: Well, following a vegetarian diet means simply not eating meat and fish and so on. But following vegetarianism means regarding the following of a vegetarian diet as a sort of self sufficient philosophy. That you're just a vegetarian and you follow vegetarianism. It's on that that you take your stand, that is all important to you. You see what you mean. You make the fact that you adopt a vegetarian diet the be all and end all.

V: As the primary objective.

S: Yes, of your ethical and religious life. So a Buddhist should be a vegetarian but should not follow vegetarianism.

Lalitaratna We had one of those at Hockneys. A customer, and as he leaves the restaurant, I heard Padmaraja say "another blow for vegetarianism". (laughter) Member of the vegetarian society and a very serious man.

S: Another blow struck (laughter) No doubt it's an important application of the principle of non-violence. But vegetarianism seems to suggest that it's almost the only one and that to be a vegetarian is tantamount to being a religious person. You get a lot of this in India, in orthodox Hindu circles. If you're not a vegetarian they will think you cannot

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S: ..possibly be a good man. And if you are a vegetarian you must be a good man. It almost doesn't matter what else you may do or not do. To be a vegetarian is the all important thing for some orthodox Hindus. Just as for some extreme protestant Christians, not to drink is almost the most important thing, that you are teetotal.

V: It's as if you're mistaking means for the reason you've got the disciplines in the first place. Was it Nagabodhi that said that as he was flying back, there was an Indian on the plane who asked for a vegetarian meal. And a vegetarian meal came with eggs in it, which was by their strict definition not vegetarian. He was quite rigid about this.

S: Some orthodox Hindus, if they're talking or asking about Europeans they will say or ask "are they vegetarians?". If someone says "no they're not vegetarians" then they say "these Europeans are very himsa, very violent people". They will pride themselves that they are very non violent but overlooking entirely all the things that they do, to the untouchables for instance. That just doesn't enter into consideration. They may be businessmen, they may be extorting, they may be exploiting, that just doesn't count. They don't eat meat, or fish ... or eggs. So they are vegetarians, they are good people, religious people. There's a lot of that in some orthodox Hindu circles. But anyway that's a little bit off the track so let's go on.

So these 3 verses have covered the first precept we may say. So let's see what the next verse covers. Would someone like to read that.

v.119 "The man who takes unbid
By stealth from forest land

Or village others' goods:"

S: Yes. So that's not something that requires much explanation in

the Pali. The man who from the village or forest covets that which belongs to another and who goes away taking it. That man is a vasala. So which precept is being covered here?

V: Taking the not given.

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S: Clearly taking that which is not given. Because he says () he goes taking that which has not been given. It may be just some lumps

of fuel, some wood from the forest and branches, but they don't belong to him. Or from the village he may have removed something from somebody's house. That suggests according to here is to take, to take away. So that's pretty obvious. Do any questions really arise with regards to the second precept. Is it all really clear and straightforward? Not to take that which is not given.

V: About the use of the word stealth.

S: Well clearly stealing really includes that which you do secretly

or by indirect means. Stealth suggests that no one knows that you do it. But even if they don't it's still a fact. What about those marginal cases like perquisites. What's left over belongs to you, sort of thing.

V: I'm a businessman so we'd better not go into it too much. (laughter)

S: So what is this basic principle governing this precept. Is it really

so clear and straightforward as it seems. You should not take that which is not given. But what does that imply?

V: You really only take or use that which is freely given. There's that pair of generosity and only taking what is given.

S: Furthermore why should you not take from another that which he has not given you.

V: It reflects on you yourself and on him. On yourself it's a product of craving and stimulates craving.

S: That presupposes that there's something deeper still. The fact that he has to give it to you. Yes it presupposes ownership. So what is the Buddhist attitude towards ownership. You actually have to ask that question.

V: It's not the anarchist one.

[35]

S: For instance one might recall what Proudhon said. I'm not sure whether he was anarchist or socialist, when he said, "all property is theft". So what bearing has this upon this precept? Does it mean that for a Buddhist, you are obliged to accept the property institutions of the society to which you belong?

V: Clearly not.

S: But if you do not accept, then what sort of line of behaviour is

indicated? Do you forceably try to wrest from other people those things that they have misappropriated? Do you try to convince them by reasoned argument or what? Is it justifiable to adopt a Robin Hood sort of attitude of taking from the rich in order to give to the poor because the rich must have stolen it from the poor. Sometime or other whether by legal means or not. Are you justified in disregarding legality? What connection is there between legality and morality? All these sorts of questions are really raised. Sooner or later from a Buddhist point of view especially in the west we have to go into them quite seriously.

V: What of business when you are earning large sums of money. Quite often you have to charge quite high prices.

S: No one is obliged to buy your goods.

V: Right. so whoever accepts the price is giving what you ask. Presumably it has a lot to do with how you present it. If you present to a customer who is justifiably naive a price and pretend your price is actually a very low bid and convince him when it is actually a high bid that is ...

S: What would involve untruthfulness you see. Another precept.

V: You see quite often with say the building world. The mark up on materials can fluctuate quite a bit. Sometimes up to 100%. So you are charging twice as much for what you buy something for. It's quite common throughout that business.

S: But that is not necessarily taking the not given.

[36]

V: I hope not because I do it too. (laughter)

S: So this isn't a simple or straightforward matter, is it? How is one

to adjust the relations between this precept of not taking the not given and the institution of private property, or even collective property? I don't think it's enough simply to say you mustn't steal, you mustn't take what is not given. I think you've got to go into it more deeply than that. Of course the psychological aspect is relevant. If you are stealing because of greed, whatever the property institutions of your society may be, to the extent that your action is motivated by greed, it's unskilful. It would still be unskilful even if your action was legally permissible. But from a moral point of view it is not enough to say it is not against the law. You may be sailing pretty close to the wind and your underlying attitude may be very unskilful basically unethical. So the fact that you are not actually breaking the law would not

be enough for a Buddhist.

V: It surely must be the effect it is having on others or yourself.

S: Yes. Or both.

V: I've thought about it a bit in the past. It seemed to me that the

Buddha is accepting the property institutions of any given society. It's as if you have to work within that framework. This is just from this and from a few later things. I don't know if I'm over generalizing on it, but that's what it seems to indicate.

S: It would seem to me that if say the law is unethical, maybe it's a law governing property is unethical. I think one should call that into question by actually breaking it only in very very extreme circumstances. Because the maintenance of law is so important for the maintenance of society itself. So sometimes you may have to bear even with an unjust law, and observe an unjust law for the time being until such time as you can mobilize public opinion and get it changed. Because it would have such a deleterious effect on society as a whole if you were to weaken the influence of law. If on the other hand all the laws were bad in society, all the laws were basically unethical you might feel you have no alternative but to break the law and take the consequences. So sometimes it's a very fine point. It's not easy to decide sometimes. Perhaps under certain conditions whether you are going to do more harm by [37] observing or obeying an unethical law or more harm by breaking that law. It's not always easy.

V: Presumably in some situations you may take what, in law, is not given.

S: If you can get away with it, presumably. But there might be a case where you are convinced you are not motivated by personal greed or by an unskilful mental state. But if you are breaking the law, and it is an ethical act to break that particular law, and you're reasonably confident that you are not going to be found out. There again, there's another incident. You're not being completely honest or open with society at large and that also is perhaps not a very desirable situation to be in. Even though it is not your fault. I think this is one of the worst things that a bad society does to the individual or an unjust society does to the individual. It compels him almost in his own self defence to be in effect dishonest. He cannot be open. He cannot afford to be open, because if he was he might be stood up against a wall and shot. So this is very often almost the worst thing that an unjust society can do to an individual or to its individual members.

Lalitaratna And that dishonesty will harm that individual's development.

S: Even though it's not his fault, yes. He could be open and honest but

it's a very difficult decision to be open and honest, at the cost of your life. You may have your own private opinion of a certain dictator, under whose dictatorship you live. But you don't dare to express it. You cannot be blamed for not expressing it because if you did express it you could be liquidated. But the fact that you cannot express it must have a corrosive effect on your own mental state.

V: It's not allowed to develop naturally. Presumably. (Pause)

S: Anyway I go into all these things only to suggest perhaps that

the observance of the second precept of not taking the not given is perhaps more complex affair than might appear at first sight. The

verse doesn't suggest any of these complexities. The verse suggests in a quite straightforward sort of way that to take what is not given [38] to take the property of others, is wrong, and therefore that others have the right to possess individual property or that society has the right to possess collective property. It's interesting in this respect, that in the Sangha private property was strictly limited. Are you aware of that? You're aware that the Buddha founded a spiritual community called the Sangha consisting of the bhikshus originally into which a sort of appendix was added in the form of bhikshuni which was not completely different from it but certainly not merged with it. So in the bhikshu sangha in the spiritual community of the bhikshus, there was very very limited scope for private ownership. A bhikshu possessed individually only 8 things called Do you know what they were? 3 robes or pieces of cloth let us say. A water strainer. A razor, a begging bowl and a needle. These were their only individual possessions everything else belonged to the resident spiritual community collectively.

V: Were books added later?

S: Books were added later by the Sarvastivadins. There were no books in the Buddha's day. Actually the sarvastis added a number of things like shoes and cloaks and ...

V: Umbrellas? (laughter)

S: But actually in the Buddha's day there were only these 8 very simple

things that were your own. Everything else belonged to the community. So in a way to the extent that the Bhikshu sangha offers a model to our own spiritual community within the residential spiritual community you should really aim at sharing everything, except for z. few very personal items. Some people don't even mind sharing clothes. Maybe their pullover, their shirt, or their pair of trousers, they don't mind. That's all quite positive one might say because it means the sense of private ownership is less. But there's another very important point that arises here and it's psychologically very very important indeed. And that is that what is everybody's property is nobody's property. What does that mean in practical terms in the end very often unfortunately?

V: It's abused.

[39]

S: You look after your own things, you don't look after things to

the same extent which belong to other people collectively. You don't have such care for public property so to speak well not in these capitalist countries, as you do towards your own private property. In communist countries they've got this very strong sense of the people's property and offences against the people's property are severely punished. If one doesn't say

that it's right, at least it's no more wrong than to take seriously offences against private property. But that's unfortunate that even a spiritual community like one within the FWBO, supposing the record player belongs to everybody, chances are that it will be abused. It's very unfortunate that that sort of sense of responsibility to what belongs to all of you doesn't exist, to as high a degree of your sense of responsibility towards what belongs to you. Which isn't so much a sense of responsibility as a sense of ownership or possessiveness, and all the rest of it. So certainly it would be very desirable if within communities there's a greater tendency just to have everything in common, even money perhaps. But it would have to go hand in hand with a greater awareness of the things that you were using and a greater sense of responsibility towards them.

V: There seems if anything to be a decrease in the Friends from the common purse principle which was more or less prevalent in communities about four years ago.

S: Are there any communities that have a common purse at present?

9: Well there is (). Well I'm the only one, well there's Yashopala as well, 50 - 50 so ...

V: How far does a common purse go. I don't understand.

S: You just keep your pocket money. That's it. But everything else ... you just get your \$7.50 or \$10 a week.

S: The rest goes to the community.

V: Yes Aryatara is run like that.

V: Sukhavati was. I don't know if it is now.

V: Everyone gets a standard ...

[40]

S: And everything else they get is private property so to speak. If say their father gives them \$100 then that's theirs. It doesn't come into the community kitty.

V: They can contribute it to the community kitty. It's left up to them.

V: I'm not sure that setting any particular system up would necessarily

Produce the positive effect.

S: Right.

V: To have both I think it's good. I know with the way I'm working at

the moment you can develop your own generosity more. You feel like you're earning more for yourself, then you're giving yourself.

S: It is better to have some sense of ownership and then give rather than to feel that

something is being taken away from you. (laughter)

You don't feel like you give to the tax-man do you?

V: No especially if it's used for military purposes or something.

S: Some people do of course argue and the Buddha in his wisdom may have

realized this, we don't know, that a certain amount of property is necessary for individual self expression. Some people do argue along these lines.

V: Individual self expression ... as an artist or what?

S: No, just to do the things you want to do. Have any of you ever lived

in a situation where you are literally without money?

V: Any money at all ..

S: Any money at all. (pause) What would be your psychological state?

V: Powerless. (laughter)

S: Exactly, yes, powerless.

V: I was obsessed with where I was going to get food.

[41]

S: Impotence. Yes, powerless. Because money is power. If you've got money you can do practically anything. You can buy anything, go anywhere you please, you can buy a book, you can give. So it is as though at least for the ordinary person, if you've got no money, it's as though your power of action is limited. That's what I mean by your power of self expression is limited. You can't do the things that you want to do. You can't follow up the interests that you would like to follow up. I had the experience of being without money for well over 2 years - absolutely without any. I certainly noticed this. But of course being without money does especially in the sort of situation I was in bring about a great sense of freedom. Especially freedom from desires, desires in the sense of craving. I remember when I was in Benares, I was walking about in the hottest time of year, going here and there in Benares trying to arrange certain things. I was so thirsty but I couldn't even buy a cup of tea. On a hot day. I had no money. So that means that the fulfilment of desires, or cravings is precluded. You know that it's out. You are just dependent on other people seeing your need and supplying it. You can't ask. So it can be a very positive situation. But it also can be a difficult even a negative situation if it leaves you feeling frustrated and angry and powerless. I must say I personally found it very very positive. But that was because very likely I was in India and doing it as part of a religious practice in a culture which acknowledged it. I think that of course makes a very big difference.

V: It's going against the grain quite strongly in this society.

S: Because if you're in the pub, I hope you never are... (laughter)

But if you are, and all your mates have stood a round of drinks and you haven't got the money to stand your round, well how do you feel? You see. Just because you haven't got the money. You feel out of things, you can't join in, in the way others are able to. You feel a bit ashamed of yourself. Not fully a man. You're not keeping up with the others. You're a little man. Have you ever been in that position, that situation? You know what it is like. You feel a slight sense of inferiority. However unjustified. So therefore one could conceivably argue that certainly for the ordinary person, the institution of private property is necessary as providing a means of self expression. But having said that from a Buddhist point of view even so generosity is certainly a quality to be valued highly. Some [42] of the Mahayanists argued that you should even want to possess property so that you have the opportunity of practising dana. Of course it can be one great big rationalization. But on the other hand the fact that it can be a rationalization shouldn't prevent us from recognizing the possible truth the principle involved. Supposing you want to be a millionaire just so you can endow various trusts for the benefit of humanity, but in the course of making your million, maybe you trample on so many people, don't do them any good at all. Well, the means are defeating the ends. You might just as well not make your million, not do anybody harm and that would be just as big a contribution as founding your trusts for the benefit of humanity.

V: I've had desires like that and found them really difficult to try and work out how I could actually make a million without trampling on people.

S: Did you find a way?

V: Starting to (laughter) You've got to be very careful.

V: There's a slight thing which I noticed. I've had 8 weeks or so of affluence which ended on Thursday. During that time it just struck me that we're very concerned in the friends of the cost of going places. Even within Britain, the cost of a rail ticket from London to Norwich is a terrific \$19 return ordinary. But if you're earning a normal wage in Britain, it's nothing. It just strikes me that is one thing, that the common Purses have to be geared up to somehow...

S: Or it's as though that if you're in the FWBO you're permanently in the position of a man who can't stand a round of drinks. (laughter) We were, Padmasuri and I were travelling by the boat to the Stenfors retreat and her first reaction when I told her that you have to take a berth was one of 'no' to save money which is a typical friends reaction probably. And just thinking that a 16 hour overnight boat journey without a berth, and you're preparing for a retreat, it's not exactly the best way to prepare.

S: Not a very good investment.

V: No.

V: It's the difference of a cost of a \$120 return journey, that was about \$10.

[43]

S: And that would be false economy in my opinion.

V: We have taken berths.

S: Anyway that's just a bit of an exploration really of the second precept. So perhaps we can pass on from there, having opened up a few perspectives. Even though we've by no means followed them through. Would you like to read the next verse.

v.120 "Who debt incurs, and pressed,
Makes off with 'By my faith,
I say naught's due to thee!"

S: This is the simple situation of someone who has borrowed money from somebody else and who when asked for money, denies that he ever borrowed it. How mean. What an utter cad. (laughter)

So what is this an example of. Here two precepts seem to be broken. It's theft. Not giving back to someone something you've borrowed. Especially when you are asked for it. It's theft. But more than that to deny that you have ever borrowed is a lie. So you are breaking another precept. So what is especially bad about a situation of this sort?

V: You've got somebody to trust you at the beginning.

S: Yes.

V: You've entered a contract.

S: It 's a breach of trust. But it's more than that. It's much worse than that. It's a denial of a relationship. It's a breach of communication. You are saying that something that happened between you didn't happen between you. You are not only falsifying your own reality, you're trying to falsify the other person's reality. So this absolutely undermines social life. It undermines personal relations. In fact it totally negates communication between human beings. It's bad enough not to have paid up your loss but to have denied you ever borrowed, that is terrible. Supposing someone borrows some money from you, and then you ask him for it back, supposing he says, "I never borrowed it. I don't owe you any [44] money. What are you talking about?", how do you feel?

V: I'd feel really terrible. (laughter)

S: What is your basic feeling at that moment?

V: Rage.

V: No, it isn't, it's much worse than that.

V: Would it be doubt?

V: You've entered into a relationship with that other person, which is quite close. You've given him something and he's slighted you.

S: Well it's more than that. He has negated your being. Because if he denies that he is a

borrower he is denying that you are a lender. He is saying that you did not lend. You know that you are a lender. He is saying no, you are not a lender. He's negating your being. And there couldn't be any worse breach than that. It's an attack upon your personal reality, you could say. I've had it in the past, a bit of experience with people of this sort in a slightly different sort of way. Where someone tried to convince you you did something when you know quite well you didn't. That is an attack on, what I call your personal reality. It can be very, very undermining. It even makes you doubt your own sanity. Because supposing someone says, "No, I didn't borrow that money from you." You say, "Well I remember, on such and such day". "No, I didn't, you must have made a mistake." So this can be very, very undermining. This is why it is so serious. And it makes social life impossible. It makes relations between human beings impossible, it makes communication impossible. So this is one of the things that one must absolutely not do. I would say~ in a way, it's almost worse than killing and stealing, and certainly worse than ordinary telling lies. (Pause)

V: Would you say something like, the whole activity of a 'confidence man' falls into this bracket, where he establishes a false relationship of trust. As if he is selling you something which is going to do some marvel or something similar. And disappears with the money you've [45] you've entrusted in him to invest.

S: Yes. In a way it's not so bad. Because here, I think the suggestion is that it's a friend. Because you usually only lend money to a friend, not a stranger. So someone who appears on your doorstep, and tries to sell you something and takes you in, is a confidence trickster. That comes into rather a different category I would say. But the breach which is created with someone you regarded as a friend, not only won't return your money but denies that he actually borrowed it from you, that is really terrible, because some of your deepest feelings can be wounded too. Quite apart from that assault upon your own existence almost. I remember an incident. This happened between 2 people, years and years ago, who are now both Order members so it's all, sort of smoothed over. But the incident was this: it was in the early days of Sukhavati when it was very much a building site, and no one had any money, and quite a few people in those days, I'm sorry to say, were cigarette smokers. You might not believe it, but they were, quite a few of them. And to the people who were working on the building site, and who didn't have any money, and who were smokers, a little bit of tobacco, even a little dog-end, was very precious. So there was a sort of unspoken, or even spoken, agreement between people that well if I, in a moment of desperation, borrowed just a bit of tobacco from you, a quarter of a cigarette, when I'm asked for it back, you'd give it to me. You can understand this sort of situation.

V: Yes.

S: So what happened was, there was a retreat. About a dozen or 14 of them went to that. I was there also. I remember it because there was a lot of football playing on that particular weekend retreat. And an incident occurred. One particular person on that retreat, I think the day before, in desperation had borrowed a bit of tobacco. On that retreat, this person from whom he had borrowed was really feeling desperate, just for a drag. Just a few puffs. He knew that the other chap had a bit of a cigarette. So he said, do you mind giving me. So the chap opened his hand, and showed it, and then closed it. and laughed, and went away. That gave rise to enmity [46] that lasted for two or three years, between those 2 people. The person who had asked in vain, for the return, so to speak, of his bit of a cigarette, didn't forgive that person for a long, long time. And felt very, very bad, and very, very bitter afterwards. He told

me sometime later that, one day, at Sukhavati, there was this chap, looking up out of the window, pulling his head through the window and looking up from the second floor, and he said it would have given him the greatest pleasure to have pitched him out on to the roof. He said that was his actual feeling. He felt so betrayed. So this verse is dealing with a very serious matter. You mustn't treat people like that. You must not only honour, but admit and recognize them, but not just your obligations. You must maintain the reality between people.

V: It's a sort of human bond.

V: That goes on between people. You can't afford to...

S: It happens also between individuals. In the case of love. You may know a bit about this. For instance people's attitudes or feelings change sometimes. One day you might be saying to someone, one particular year, "Oh I really do love you, you're all in all to me, I can't live without you etc etc." Two or 3 years later it's a different story, you sing a different tune. You're a different sort of bird apparently. And the other person says, "But, 3 years ago you said you loved me, you'd do anything for me." and you say, "Did I? don't remember." You see. That, even though may be, you said that in a moment of delusion and projection etc etc, it can have quite a bad effect on the other person that you are denying what they had thought existed, and what in fact, you had said yourself existed only a few years before, maybe a few months before. And the reality between you breaks down. The person starts doubting their own experience. They start doubting and wondering what did in fact happen in the past. Whether they were completely deluded or completely misunderstood. But usually where it's a solid, tangible thing like a sum of money that's been borrowed, and maybe you've made a note of it in your chequebook, or maybe you've got the stub of the cheque you originally gave that person, well, there can be no doubt, they really have let you down.

[47]

V: To deny that you had remembered taking the money. You're deliberately denying the fact you received it when you know you did.

S: The Buddha, you may say, is plumbing some depths here. Let's go on. May be we've got time for just one more verse.

v.121 "Who, coveting some gaud,
Kills bagman in a lane
And with the gaud decamps:

S: () favours this sort of Anglo-Saxon English. Gaud is a sort of trinket. The Pali word is kincha camiata - coveting some little thing. Someone coveting some little thing, assails a traveller, on the road, if it's not a lane, it's just a road. So what is this? How many precepts are being broken here?

V: It says kills bagman.

S: Yes, that is not literally so. It is more like attacks or assails. He may kill him.

V: It's still being violent.

S: Yes. So violence, the first precept is being broken, what other precept is there?

V: Taking the not-given.

S: Obviously, the second one. So, how is this called in law, there's a term for this, there's a distinction here.

V: Robbery with violence.

S: It's robbery with violence, yes.

(Tape B side)

S: Robbery is taking it from him, with violence or the threat of violence. So here it's...

[48]

V: Even armed robbery, it's much heavier than just robbery.

S: Yes indeed. There's a degree of violence.

V: Even with the intention of violence, even if you don't commit it. You're still committing a crime.

V: Yes, if you're carrying a gun. Obviously intending to use it if necessary. So yes, here it's robbery with violence. The outcast is the man who commits robbery with violence. So here you're concerned with breaking of two precepts as in the preceding verse. In the preceding verse it was robbery and falsehood. In this one it is robbery with violence.

V: The outcast is beginning to sound a little like an outlaw.

S: Yes.

V: It seems that the first one was more... he keeps it to himself and then he goes out where it's more blatantly out in the violence.

S: yes.

V: There seems to be a sort of rhythm there.

V: What's a bagman?

S: A bagman is a sort of peddler, a commercial traveller. A hawker. Peddler would be the old fashioned word, who travels from village to village, with a haversack over his shoulders.

Trinkets for the housewife and that sort of thing. Maybe this is the sort of thing that the person has in mind. A packman, or bagman, travelling with his goods on his back. Travelling along a lonely road, someone attacks him and robs him, that sort of situation.

V: I suppose it must have been quite common for people to travel in that way and to be robbed in that way.

[49]

S: One used to hear stories from Tibetans who had come down from Tibet about being ambushed and attacked by robbers on the way. That is those people that came down with caravans and mules laden with goods. I once heard an amusing story in this connection. From Eastern Tibet, this was told me to illustrate the piety and devotion of the Kumbas. They are the inhabitants of Kum which is Eastern Tibet, and they are supposed to be very rough, and even warlike people but at the same time very devoted to Buddhism paradoxically. So it is said that some Kumba warriors or outlaws ambushed a particular caravan. And this caravan belonged to a very rich monastery and a very rich rimpoche, a very rich incarnate lama. So apparently the steward in charge wanted to disguise the fact that it belonged to a rich monastery, a rich incarnate lama. So he made it look as though it was a bit poor. And the leading mule was not decorated as usual, with a red plume, which apparently shows it belongs to some monastery or incarnate lama. So the caravan was attacked by the Kumba and they killed several people and they took away all the goods. But having done this they discovered that it belonged to a monastery, to an incarnate lama, and they were pious Buddhists. So they at once restored all the property that they had looted. They gave everything back. And they said to the people, "Well here's all the property that we've stolen. We're very sorry we can't bring back to life the people we have killed, but it's your own fault, you should have let us know that this caravan belongs to an incarnate lama. We never would have attacked it.

V: I find that quite inspiring. (laughter)

V: Gives you the feel of a Buddhist country.

S: Buddhism has some influence, it doesn't prevent them from robbing absolutely. But at least it prevents them from robbing incarnate lamas and monasteries.

V: It's a respect for the spiritual community.

S: It would be a bit like if the shopkeepers around Sukhavati cheated everybody else but not people from Sukhavati, from the LBC.

V That would be an achievement, wouldn't it?

[50]

S: Yes. It would mean they've felt your moral influence. They didn't feel they could cheat you, however they felt about other people.

V: Your worth ... to respect that.

S: I remember in those very early days of Sukhavati to which I've referred.

There was a very positive feeling towards the community on the part of the local shopkeepers. I don't know whether that continues. They saw these poor young men, as they used to call them, working away there so hard, and so many of them, under those terrible conditions. People really appreciated, they really felt this, and they used to give, the woman over the road gave cakes and biscuits, things like that. Others used to give vegetables or things left over they'd send across. Things that wouldn't last until Monday they'd just send them over to the community. This quite spontaneously. Not because they were Buddhists, or anything like that, they didn't know anything about it, just out of a human sympathy. But I don't know Whether that continues, perhaps it doesn't. But the main thing seems to be that these young men were on their own. The fact that there are now women around the Centre, seems to have diminished that feeling, that it's poor young men on their own, with nobody to look after them. So we've got to help them. With so many women now I think they get pretty well looked after. (laughter) Several people visiting the LBC have remarked to me that there's so many women around the Place. But I will say no more. (laughter)

V: Don't want to be discussing it at Padmaloka.

S: Pardon?

V: We've come here to get away from it. (laughter)

S: I think some of you had better stay up here then. (prolonged laughter)

I'm afraid it's not unknown for people from Padmaloka to go down to London especially for that purpose. (laughter) Just the occasional hint ... anyway I think we've gone as far this morning as we can with, with luck we'll finish tomorrow.

Lalitaratna Thank you.

(end of session)

[51]

S: So we carry on. I think this morning we may have to move along a little bit more quickly so that we can finish this text. So if we begin.

v.122 "Know him as outcast too
Who for himself for sake
Of wealth, or other's sake
As witness falsely speaks:"

S: This is often given in the Pali scriptures by the Buddha as an example of false speech, that's to say, that you bear false witness. The Buddha very often take the case of someone who has cause to be caught and is asked, "Did you see something happen?" and he says "No" even though he did see it happen. Or he said "Yes" and he didn't see it happen. False speech in this sense of bearing false witness, seems to have been regarded as an especially serious matter. You may remember that yesterday we did talk about this in connection with breakdown in communication. Where someone incurs a debt and pressed for repayment, he denies that he ever borrowed the money. SO we saw that this sort of attitude, we saw that false speech in this sort of sense is completely destructive, in fact destructive of personal relations and

personal communication. Do you remember that? So here they're pointing at a rather different case. The context here is more social. It's concerned with the destruction of good faith within the social group itself. In verse 120 you're concerned with the destruction of a relationship and communication between yourself and one other person. But here in this case, in the case of bearing false witness in the court of law, it's destructive of social life itself. It's destructive of the life of the group even of the positive group. So therefore the Buddha says, "Know him as an outcast, a vasala, a degraded person, who, either for his own sake, or for the sake of another~ or for the sake of wealth, speaks falsely as a witness, bears false witness.

V: It's a sort of covering up ()

[52]

S: Right. Yes.

V: ()

S: So do you see why this not bearing false witness in the law is so important from a social point of view?

V: Perhaps the practice of it negates the whole functions of the legal systems justice, it can't work really.

S: Yes, if the legal system can't work, presuming it's a reasonably positive social group obeying law and order can't be a bad thing. Supposing there is a situation, where an act of violence is committed, maybe there's a small, powerful group in a particular part of a particular area, and they intimidate other people, they terrorize them even though other people are in the majority. And supposing a member of this gang that no one would bear witness against them, because they're afraid, if they're asked, "No, I didn't see anything happen. I didn't see him commit that murder. I didn't see anything." So what happens? Well he gets off scot free. He and the gang to which he belonged. It continues. The violence, the terrorism and so on.

V: You do have to be quite fervently for it... You've got to support it.

S: You have to recognize the responsibility. In other words you've got to identify with that group. You've got to () otherwise social life collapses.

Darren Surely you've got to feel that group as being able to protect you, if you do tell the truth. In some situations, you go and tell the truth, especially a criminal type group, they get shot, or disappear

S: So the fact that you are required to speak the truth in this situation, not to bear false witness, suggests the existence of a social group which is sufficiently well organized as a social group to be able to afford you the necessary protection. Then you do ...

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Lalitaratna I was thinking of Socrates yesterday. And his own law condemned him to death. He was given the opportunity to escape, but he wouldn't. He said, "I stood for these laws when I was a free man, so I'll stand for them now."

S: So, I've lived under these laws all my life and I'm now an old man and it would be very unbecoming, just to run away, to abscond. If the law was used against me, even though it pursues injustice so he affirms his solidarity with the group, his base solidarity. Even though the group at that particular time at the particular moment, in relation to him, was guilty of an aberration, was guilty of an injustice. But that doesn't blind him to the necessity of remaining loyal to the group as such. He's not swayed by purely personal considerations, least of all, the consideration of saving his own life, and living a bit longer.

V: What emerges is someone who's zone a bit further than the group.

S: Yes, can take an even broader view. He can see the importance and value of the group even when the group isn't behaving very much as a positive group. So one can say, in generalizing, an outcast is one who detracts from the positive group, who undermines the positive group, the specific way in which one undermines is unwritten, but the general principle is also very clear. A positive group is after all, necessary for the development of the individual. It's very difficult to go straight from a negative group to a spiritual community, it's very doubtful whether a spiritual community could exist within the framework of a completely negative, destructive society. You need a positive group as a stepping-stone to that spiritual community. Even though the positive group as such is (quite distinct from the spiritual community. So if you're undermining the positive group, presuming a positive group exists, then to the extent you are undermining it, you are undermining the possibility of there being a spiritual community also on the basis of the group.

V: It would suggest that when you get the romantic outlaw,

who is recognized by society as outcast, by this criteria. But when he's romanticised or popularized it tends to indicate there's something very wrong with the group.

S: Yes. Or something very wrong within the group. At least. People

no longer identify so much with society, with the social group, they [54] identify more with anti-group forces, anti-social forces.

Darren Quite a strong feeling of destroying the system. Throwing a spanner in the works within society. Trying to cripple society.

S: I think a lot of people just don't understand what they are doing. In that sort of case. One certainly wants to change society, but you don't necessarily go about this simply by destroying existing societies without being able to put anything in its place.

V: What seems to be what's happening.

S: You Probably have to be quite selective in your attitude and strongly support those elements in the existing society which are healthy, which are positive, and strongly oppose those elements which are not so healthy, which pertain more to the negative group, which are

not helpful to the individual. But not oppose society as such. Man needs society, he needs a positive group. Let's go on to the next verse. 123.

v.123 "And he who's seen about
With wives of kin or friends,
By force or with consent:

S: He's also an outcast. Let's see what Chalmers translation is. 'By force or with consent the wastrel holds commerce with wives of kinsmen, or their friends.' The actual text says 'He who relations of friends wives is seen around' either forcibly or by mutual consent, mutual love. Know him as an outcast. So here we come on to the fourth precept. As we see these verses have covered 3 precepts so far, now we come on to the fourth. The precept of not harming living beings has been covered, the precept of not taking what has not been given has been covered, the precept of not speaking what is not true has been covered. Now we come on to kamesu micchacara. Now we are concerned with sexual misconduct. So this is understood in terms of adultery, or even adultery, including rape. So, why is adultery wrong? One might raise that point. It's mentioned from the point of view of the man involved. The woman's point of view is, I won't say not taken into consideration but it's from the man's point of view, he is, as it were, the culprit. He is seen with the wives, or relations, or [55] friends, perhaps under suspicious circumstances. The suggestion is that Something is going on between him and the wives of relations and friends. Either with the consent of the women concerned or against it. And this is considered the conduct of an outcast. Why?

V: Presumably he is stooping to destroy the social system again, and also obviously the effect on the persons involved.

S: Yes, the violence.

V: Especially if they were friends, it destroys the trust, their trust in friendship.

S: Yes, because for instance if you allow your wife to converse freely with relations or friends. There is a tacit understanding that those relatives, those friends, those men, will not take advantage of the fact that your wife is permitted that sort of freedom. So if advantage is taken of that, it represents a breach of trust.

V: The context seems in some way similar to modern India, where traditionally a married woman only would have contact with male relatives, and relatives of husbands and friends.

S: Yes, because she doesn't go out and about very much. But yes, she would be coming into contact with her husband's brothers, certainly. With her father in law, with cousins. And because they were relations, they would be allowed free access to the home, the wife would talk with them and the understanding is, of course, that she is respected as your wife. You're not going to take advantage of the access you have to her, because you are related. The same with your friends, i.e. in India actually men are very careful, very cautious about introducing their personal male friends into the home. Very often you can be very close friends with another man, and you'd never meet his wife. You might see her, you might go home with him, she might appear from the kitchen, scuffle in with a cup of tea and scuffle back to the kitchen. It wouldn't be considered necessary that you should notice her, or certainly be introduced to her. No. She's an anonymous woman. A member of your friend's household who appears with

tea or with food, this is especially the case among the higher castes. It [56] is not considered necessary that you should take any personal notice of her. If she happens to be your host's aged mother well he may just say 'my mother'. And that's that. But the idea of your wife strolling in and sitting down and joining the conversation well this is just not on. In traditional Indian society it just doesn't happen.

V: In a sense it's just as reasonable as our situation.

S: Oh yes right. Sometimes the women listen behind the door. (laughter) They don't go into the room. In ancient India in India still, if a relation or friend is around, he doesn't take advantage of the fact that he has access to your home, to commit adultery with your wife. That would be regarded as very reprehensible. Because it would mean that unless you accept a free-for-all, which most husbands are not prepared to accept, then you have to debar, even male relations, from your home and debar your own friends. That would not be a very desirable state of affairs. So from this point of view, traditionally in Buddhism, adultery is regarded as the standard form of sexual misconduct. This is what sexual misconduct essentially is.

V: noes one have to be cautious in taking that over into other cultures? Because in a sense it is rape or adultery with the wife of a friend or relative, as if these are the only 2 possibilities. Presumably because women get married off so early, and that, in Eskimo cultures, it's almost the act of the host if someone stayed the night, to sleep, who is your good friend to make sure he has a woman to sleep with that night.

V: Maybe because it's cold, I'm not sure. (laughter)

S: Yes but nob necessarily somebody's wife. Though there are cultures where it is not unknown. How does this precept work out in terms of the freer morality, freer in inverted commas, of our own day. What about so-called open-ended marriage? Do you see what I mean?

V: What do you mean by open-ended?

S: Well I don't know anything about these things from personal experience. (laughter) But there is such a thing, sorry if I'm wrong, as open-ended [57] marriage. That is to say, you marry somebody, you're husband and wife, and you have an understanding 'well if you fancy somebody else from time to time I'm not going to stand in your way'. Some married people have that sort of understanding. So what do you think of that, would that constitute adultery?

Lalitaratna No.

V: In theory you would have.

V: I think in theory it wouldn't. But in actual practice I think

it would be quite rare that a couple who were attached to each other could actually stand that sort of ...

S: But does it tell you anything about that relationship itself that kind of marriage, how would

you view say from a Buddhist point of view, that kind of marriage. It raises the question of what is marriage.

V: It would seem there is not much commitment there.

S: Yes. It is almost as though people are a little weary of commitment in any field, in any area. So one might say to the extent that there is commitment, that to that extent there is the possibility of adultery. In the sense of a breach of that commitment, a breach of that faith, between two people. To the extent that there is a prior absence of commitment, to that extent one might say there was no marriage. You have to have marriage as an institution, for adultery to be possible. You have to have the concept of people pledging themselves to each other for such a thing as adultery to be possible. So here one is concerned with a third party's almost forceable disruption of an understanding or a relationship between 2 other people. According to Indian ideas the wife is the weaker member of the relationship. She can be got at if her husband isn't careful. So it suggests that in pursuing your own sexual interests you have to be careful not to trespass I won't say on the rights of other people, but not to disrupt existing relationships especially when there is possibility of social disruption or disruption within the family or within a whole number of inter related families.

V You can't just rationalize it by questioning the whole use [58] of disruption. If it's there then that's respected.

S: It could be that the 2 people concerned have got a very unskilled addiction to each other. That is quite possible. But nonetheless that fact does not excuse your breaking up that relationship, just for your own essentially quite selfish purposes, your own selfish aims. In other words, in entering into relationships with people, you have to take into consideration that they have relationships with other people. You have to take into consideration the fact that there is a whole network of relationships; You can't just consider yourself and just one other person even. You can't isolate yourself from the rest of society in that sort of way. To extend the example, supposing the woman with whom you become involved, the married woman, not just a married woman, supposing she is a mother, supposing she's got children, so your disruption of the relationship between her and her husband could have repercussions as far as the children were concerned. You as a responsible individual, should bear that in mind, and exercise some foresight. Exercise if necessary some self-control, self-restraint

Darren There should be a lot more respect for the marriage situation and society.

S: One is not saying that marriage as we know it is ideal or even that particular marriage is ideal, but you're not likely to improve things, either in general or in particular, by blundering in and disrupting that existing set-up, just for the sake of your own gratification.

Darren It's got to grow, it's got to change in growth ways, rather than storming in and chopping it all up.

V: I think one thing as well, it's never recognized to be what you're explaining it as, which I think is what it usually is someone just wanting to gratify their sensual desires. It's either explained typically in terms of an ideal of the true love relationship which they are trying to establish. Again ignoring other people's commitments or as some sort of idealistic promiscuous situation.

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S: or where you are trying to liberate the woman.

V: Yes, I forgot that one. (laughter)

S: Trying to liberate her from that stuffy, domestic situation which narrows the path to freedom. I hope nobody has ever shot that particular line.

V: I hope more out of lust There are lots of ways

V: I noticed in your talks in India, Bhante, that when you came to this precept, of the three I heard. You tended to give the example of a man, who got old and his wife was no longer as attractive, didn't have any teeth left.

S: That was with reference to the Pyriana Sutta Something like that was mentioned, certain passages in the Pali scriptures.

V: But that you in a sense you admonished people, if they were married, not to go and commit adultery but not necessarily say anything about men or women who were not married.

S: Well in India the whole subject of sex is such a touchy one. When I give lectures and speak through an interpreter, I know from experience that if I said anything about sex, except a bare repetition of the fourth precept, the interpreter gets very embarrassed. And often does not interpret what I say, waters it down considerably. Or generalizes it. They're very very hesitant, and very embarrassed if there's anything to depart from mere generalities. Usually one has to say, "don't commit adultery" and you hasten on to the next precept. Indians are very sensitive in this area. They don't even like sex to be mentioned, if women are present, which they might well be in public. One can understand their attitude. It means you can't discuss any sexual question in the lecture, that's just not possible. You can't go further than say "don't commit adultery", "remain satisfied with your wife, husband". You may add a little bit [40] of a joke, in the way that I did, but nothing more than that. It's still an area of great sensitivity If anything Indian society in this respect is less free than it was at the time of the Buddha. I think in the time of the Buddha, there was a much more pagan attitude toward sex in society, not now

Danavira: Indians who come over here, Bhante, have they retained that attitude?

S: I think they've retained it to a great extent. And of course there's conflict. I was reading a series of articles about the Asian community in Britain, especially the Indian community. And of course there's a very great difference between the ethical attitude, especially attitude with regard to sex, of the older generation of Indian immigrants in this country and their children who have been born and brought up in Britain, and who share the attitudes of their contemporaries. Sometimes there are violent conflicts within the home, especially between fathers and teenage daughters who want to stay out late at night. It's unthinkable for Indians, a teenage girl should just be allowed out of the house on her own, with members of the opposite sex. It's unthinkable, it's outrageous. Of course the situation is in many Asian homes that the father tries to keep the girl home almost by force, and the girl is determined to go out. Determined to go to discos with boyfriends even etc etc, and there's terrific conflict. Whereas at the same time the girl is very fond of her family, attached to the family, but at the same

time there are all these outside influences at work on her, She wants to lead the life of an ordinary British teenager, whereas her father, her parents, older members of the family generally, want her to live as though she was in Bombay or some village in Maharashtra. Strictly segregated from members of the opposite sex until marriage. Being married off early by way of an arranged marriage. She might even fall in love with one of her boyfriends, and want to marry him regardless of his suitability from the caste point of view. That is also intolerable. There have been instances of fathers and elder brothers even killing the girl, because they felt they brought shame and disgrace on the family by their behaviour. So you can really see the clash of two cultures here, the clash [61] of two sets of ethical attitudes. Two sets of attitudes towards sex. And the girls especially are in a very very difficult position, because Indians are more concerned, as all traditional societies are much more concerned about female chastity than about male chastity. They don't bother too much about what the boys may be doing, but when it comes to the girls they're very very concerned indeed. In many Indian communities, in many Hindu communities in India, you don't really expect a man outside the family to seriously look at your womenfolk. Sometimes they go about veiled, with the saris over their heads, their faces.

Darren: There's quite a strong connection even within our society in the same way. More concern with women's chastity.

S: Well, for obvious reasons. Because, well we won't go into it. Perhaps regardless of the particular social set-ups, the whole precept, or this verse expresses a concern for an awareness of the consequences of your own actions. That you should not think simply in terms of gratifying your own desires, ignoring the effect of your actions upon other people. Perhaps on many other people. This is an area within which we are very prone to that sort of thing.

Darren: I felt it stronger than all the other precepts, actually. The effect it's had on others is stronger than simply robbing their house, a crime, or even having a fight with someone, isn't as damaging as sleeping with your friend's wife.

S: Then you can develop very ambiguous feelings towards him. On one hand he's a friend. On the other hand he's taken advantage of your friendship. And you can feel a great conflict in respect of the relation with your wife. You don't know whether to go on loving her or whether to kill her. It can be as serious as that. And of course what about the woman herself, torn between two men. That's quite a serious situation for a woman to be in.

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V: It does seem to have a lot to do with the very much 60s and 70s ideal of self fulfilment. Which in the first words it sounds very positive and it can lead to positive things, but it tends to mean that you have to seek the perfect romantic relationship, that you have to fulfil yourself, and you have to be creative in quite a reactive way.

S: I think this whole ideology of self-fulfilment, can be

(end of cassette 2)

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S: Used to justify an attitude of complete selfishness. I have detected tendencies of this sort within the FWBO itself sometimes. As when people convince themselves, "well, I need this

for my personal development." Obviously this is the accepted language, that is the language one is supposed to speak. That is the way in which you are supposed to think in terms of your self development. So people might feel they want something, they desire something, they can't say frankly and straightforwardly. "I want that, I desire that." they put it in another way, they say, "I think having that would be good for my self-development." We hear things like, "I think I'll go and spend a few weeks in Greece, I think it would be good for my self-development." (laughter) or "I think I'll sleep with his wife, I think it'll be good for my self-development - and very good for her indeed, it would liberate her from the claustrophobic domestic situation." I think one has to be very careful about this. Certainly consider the effect of one's action upon other people, third parties or fourth parties.

V: It's almost as if people aren't prepared to just accept a level which is higher than theirs in that it's a level, where they want things.

S: Also, when the question of adultery does arise, an element of deceit is necessarily introduced. Your thought to tell lies, if it's your friend's wife you're sleeping with, you're going to have to tell lies to him. She'll have to tell lies to him. Maybe she'll end up telling lies to you too. Things can get really complicated, because of that lack of consideration, foresight and so on. Anyway, it's not a very inspiring subject, perhaps we can go on to another precept. The basic principle is of responsibility for one's actions, taking always into consideration the effect of your actions upon other people. Not only the people with whom you are immediately concerned, but people with whom they also are concerned. All right, the next one.

[64]

v.124 "Who, being rich, supports
Not parents in their age,
When gone is all their youth:

S: Yes, he is the outcaste. The wastrel is he who, well-to-do himself, supports not aged parents after their prime. That's quite clear and straightforward, but what is the principle involved here? Here in a way there is a breach, a breach of faith, a breach of trust, because don't forget the ancient Indian situation, don't even forget the modern Indian situation. There's no .

V: old age pension.

S: Old age pensions. Old people are dependent for their support upon well, their children, their sons especially. So under that system, in that sort of situation, if you, having been brought up by your parents, having been supported by them, maybe for 15, 20 years at least, don't in your turn support them when they are no longer in a position to support themselves, well what does that imply? What sort of attitude does that suggest on your part?

V: Letting down your ...

V: It's meanness.

S: It's ingratitude, it suggests or implies ingratitude.

Darren: but it's almost as if there's a balance, a natural balance, the first 15 years and the last

15 years. It's like a life contract.

S: Yes.

V: In the while family, human structure.

S: The assumption is that the family is quite a positive, social entity. That your relationship with your parents is, on the whole, a happy and positive one. That they brought up well, and that therefore you ought to be grateful to them. I think the modern situation in which you are normally not on good terms [65] with your parents, and even hate them, is probably quite an aberration in ordinary human terms. Perhaps it's not their fault, perhaps it's the fault, so to speak, of society at large to a greater extent. But the fact is that very often in our society one isn't on good terms with one's parents, and certainly wouldn't feel very happy about supporting them in their old age. This particular verse, and the Buddha's teaching in general on this particular topic, presupposes the family as a reasonably positive social entity, that was to say the extended family, the joint family. It presupposes that as a reasonably positive institution within which children can be brought up in a quite reasonably, positive way. To a certain extent, that it would be reasonable to expect that they would naturally feel grateful to the parents who had brought them up, and want to support them in their old age, or be happy to do that, as Indians usually are.

V: Don't you think it's more about responsibility? Like it is the parents responsibility to bring up the children. It's a responsibility when you start having children in the same way that the fact that we have a mother and father, in their old age, it's our responsibility.

S: I think I've mentioned before that in Buddhism matricide and patricide are regarded as worse than ordinary murder. You remember the explanations I've given of that. Why should that be? Why should it be worse to kill your own father or your own mother than to kill some other person? What is the reason?

V: They're a big part of yourself.

S: Yes, they're a big part of yourself. So in the same way, if you don't have a positive feeling, a warm natural feeling towards your old parents, so that you want to help them, you want to look after them when they can no longer look after themselves, what does that suggest about your relations to them, or even your attitude towards your own self?

[66]

V: It's denying a big part of yourself.

S: It's denying a big part of yourself. It's denying a relationship

which, at least deep-down, does exist. This is why I've always emphasized how important it is to arrive at a positive relationship with one's own parents if that doesn't already exist. I think this, psychologically speaking, is very important. Because, for better or worse you are bound up with your own parents. You can't repudiate your own parents. That's impossible. You've been landed with them for this life, you've been born of them. They've brought you up, your life is inextricably interconnected with theirs. That it is impossible for you to repudiate that. You may outwardly repudiate it, but psychologically for better or for worse, you are still

bound up with it. So since it's inevitable that you are bound up with them, you simply have, from a Buddhist point of view, to make your relationship with them, if it isn't already so, a positive one. And sort out, after becoming involved with Buddhism, any negativity there may be in your relationship with, or attitude towards your parents. At least so far as lies in your power, in some cases parents don't reciprocate. If that happens, at least you're clear as regards your attitudes towards them.

V: Two questions come to mind with that. One is, what about the implications in the Buddha's day, and later in more traditional Indian and some other Eastern civilizations where, a son would leave home to take up the homeless life, in the sense abandoning this role of being his parents old age pension. Presumably in most families the assumption is there are brothers who are not interested in a homeless life, or so many of the families were of a wealthy caste where they had enough rich cousins or something, but the Buddha doesn't seem to be concerned about other categories.

S: Well, there is an interesting provision, to somebody covering this, in the Vinaya. You know that in the Buddha's day the Bhikkhus usually, the expression is, 'begged their food'. That is to say they were dependent for their food on other people, [67] They didn't always actually beg it. They could either go from door to door collecting food or they could accept invitations to people's houses for meals; or people could take meals to where the monks were staying. But there was a rule that if a monk was begging, if he was collecting food from door to door with his begging bowl, he was permitted to share that with fellow monks, especially with his teacher or fellow disciples of the same teacher, but he wasn't allowed to share that food with the laity. Do you see what I mean? Because the people who gave the food, gave it on the understanding that it was being given to monks. They wanted to support people leading a spiritual life. So if you were to share that food with people who were not leading a spiritual life, in a way you would be accepting the food on false pretences. But there was one exception, which was that the Bhikkhu was permitted to share the contents of his begging bowl with his mother if she had no other means of support. Not even with the father. The reasons perhaps are obvious. But certainly with his mother. So that meant that even in the case of a Bhikkhu, even in the case of one fully committed to the spiritual life, the responsibility of supporting your mother at least, is not entirely abrogated. You may have noticed yesterday Kapa was speaking about but she mentioned that he was supporting his old mother. She was a really difficult character, I remember her very well. But he continued to have her staying with him, he looked after her, she must have been with him at least 20 years. And he bore with her quite cheerfully and quite patiently, and looked after her. And conducted her after-death ceremony after her death. Saw her safely into the other world.

V: Presumably this verse here can be extended to matters of health, it's not just financial support.

S: Oh yes, it's caring for. Even psychologically. Your parents, or there maybe even just one of them left, they may be on their own. Well certainly keep up contact with them. Make sure they don't feel lonely and neglected.

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V: You don't mean to imply that say, if one parent dies and the other feels lonely or neglected, or is really financially hard-up, that one should move out of the community, go a few thousand miles, and move in with one's mother, and spend a large amount of time supporting

her.

S: No, I'm not suggesting that. Because everybody has also to live their own life, without undue dependence on other people. That applies to one's parents too. Supposing one of one's parents died, it would be quite natural, and quite right that, when that happened, you should go and spend some time with the remaining parent, just to help them get over the bereavement. But I don't think it would be reasonable to stay with them indefinitely. You'd have to encourage the remaining parent just to get on with living, encourage him or her to extend his or her circle of friends, develop new interests and so on. I think it wouldn't be a very healthy or positive situation if you just remained with them indefinitely (pause) But in a way the general principle involved is that, even though yes one must develop from the group to the spiritual community, even though you have to pass from these ties and relationships, based upon blood and so on, to ties and relationships based upon common spiritual interests and ideals, that is not necessarily to be brought about by way of a violent breach, of existing ties. There must be something more of the nature of a growth of development, again one doesn't want to provide material for rationalization. It's a question of taking into account the fact that, very often, you are tied more than you think. I'm using the word tied, and that's not an altogether positive one, but you must take into consideration that existing ties, especially with blood relations very often go deeper than you think. So you have to take that fact into consideration. Not that you should allow that fact to limit you. But transcend that sort of tie, in a way that will really enable you to transcend it, that will not leave you still tied without your really knowing it. I think it's quite important to have things sorted out on this sort of level which means being freed from one's parents, certainly, but having a positive attitude towards them, and if possible, a positive relationship. That's in your own interests (pause)

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It's as though there are two extremes, one is you remain under the domination of your parents, remain under the control of your parents at least psychologically, you never break free. You're never your own man. You never really develop as an individual. You never really grow up, that's one extreme. A lot of people are trapped in this extreme. The other is that you break free from your parents, but it's not a real freedom, It's a reactive freedom, a reactive breaking away. There's a lot of emotional negativity. You're still tied to a great extent. Perhaps without realizing it. You're tied by the very fact that you're still reacting against them. That's the other extreme. If you dislike your parents, you're still tied. If you hate your parents, you're still tied. If you hate them so much you can't even bear to go and see them, and maybe you don't year after year, you're still tied to them even if you don't see them. So the Middle Way is being free, but having a positive attitude towards them even helping them if necessary. But not being bound by them. Living your own life, developing and growing in your own way. But keeping that positive contact with them. This is the middle way. It probably in most cases, it will be good if you were to have a period of physical separation from your parents~ To make quite sure that you do feel free from them. But that doesn't imply that you should adopt a negative attitude towards them. (long pause) So in this verse, it's very much concerned with breach of natural, social, positive, good relationships.

Lalitaratna It's been a bit of a surprise for me this study. You do become at bit anti the group', Pro spiritual community, anti the group. And it feels like going back to supporting the group.

S: I think we have to understand why we've become anti the group. I think it's because the particular group or cluster of groups that we belong to or have been brought up in, has a

number of negative features, which we quite rightly reject. But I think we have to not reject it to such an extent we are no longer able to appreciate the idea, of the positive group. We even have to recognize that even the social life with which we are familiar, the kind of group in which we are involved, have at least some positive features. And we shouldn't refuse to recognize that. You mustn't identify yourself with a spiritual [70] community so strongly that you actually hate the group. Again a middle way. Don't get ensnared in the group, but don't adopt a completely negative attitude towards it.

Lalitaratna Otherwise I guess you are still in the group, in a sense.

S: In a sense you are, yes. Because in the same way that your parents have deeply influenced you, in a sense are part of you, the group too has deeply influenced you and is part of you. You are still part of it, to an extent greater perhaps than you sometimes realize.

V: You shocked me.

S: And there is such a thing as pseudo independence of the group, which you can feel falsely, while really 99% remaining dependent on the group. Where would you be without the group, however bad that group is, you wouldn't be anywhere at all perhaps. You're still continuing to depend upon it even when you're talking against it.

V: Perhaps that's another definition of an individualist.

S: Yes. An individualist is one that has contempt for that which he is completely dependent upon. I used to feel this very often with hippies, or some of our hippie Friends in the old days. They were always running down society, but how were they living? They were living out of the dustbins of society, on the edges of society. Plundering society a bit. They were regarding that as freedom from society, but they were totally dependent. They were even more dependent than ordinary people because they weren't, in many cases, making any contribution to society.

V: Living off the scraps of it.

S: Living off the scraps of it, yes. So that wasn't really freedom from society. It's as though some of them, at least, compensated for their feelings of dependence upon society [71] because they couldn't completely ignore the fact that they were dependent upon society, by continually running society down. Anyway we won't pursue that. Simply that perhaps a more positive attitude towards the group is called for.

V: But when you speak of the more positive towards the group, do you mean necessarily our largest group i.e. Western society or do you mean the group as a phenomenon, whichever circles of groups we tend to belong to

S: Both. I think we have to recognize that in social terms at least, the group or groups to which we at present belong, are abnormal, in strictly historical terms, for various partly indefinable historical reasons. So that the fact that 'the group' just to use that rather simple expression, 'the group' with which we are familiar has certain quite abnormal, distorted features, shouldn't blind us to the fact that the group, as such, is for the developing person, even the evolving individual, a positive phenomenon, without which he can't live, he can't

exist.

V: The feeling that the roots of the group are almost greed, hatred and delusion. That's what almost feeds the group, a lot of it is geared towards war, and hatred, and greed of land, and materialistic wealth, greed again, and just delusion, filtering through it all.

S: But it's also geared to feeding you, clothing you and sheltering you. Bringing you up.

V: So there's quite a lot of discrimination to be ...

S: Yes, this is what I mentioned earlier on. That one's attitude really, with regard to the present group with which we are all involved, has to be selective. Support and encourage positive trends, positive trends that exist, and strongly oppose those which are other than that, which are negative ones.

V Which in a way is a big part of society. [72] Which again is part of your duty to the larger society. Not to try and ignore what is going on but do the best that you can for it, by strengthening what deserves to be strengthened, and opposing what deserves to be removed. You can't abandon society completely, any more than you can really abandon your parents. You can't live outside society. It's just not possible. That doesn't mean that you are restricted to society, but that you cannot cut off completely. Even by living in a spiritual community.

V: With the war between England and Argentina, a lot of thinking and thoughts arising of whether we would actually fight came the crunch. Buddhists or individually - what were our feelings? Whether we would say "here is a dictator". Something we felt wasn't healthy taking over a part of society that we thought was healthy, Whether we would fight for it. I was surprised to see how many people were prepared, they thought they would be prepared to fight if they thought it was a worse society taking over a healthy one. Quite a strong stand.

S: It's a bit like the division that occurred in New Zealand not so very long ago between those who were in favour of the Springboks tour and those who were against it. I was very surprised myself reading in the papers the extent to which, the passions of these calm and placid people Kiwis have been aroused. The whole country seemed up in arms and divided into two camps. That were in danger of flying at each others throats. I hope there weren't heated arguments between Kiwis over here in Britain.

Darren: It almost brought the whole police structure down~the society almost crumbled. Half the society against the police. Because the police has to stand between them, and then all of a sudden both sides turned on the police, the whole society.

S: It s interesting that New Zealand society could be disrupted by that particular subject.

[73]

Darren: Racial ...

S: No, rugby (laughter)

As though half the population were saying 'we're going to see our rugby, regardless'. We're not going to take into account any other consideration, just rugby. And the other half were

saying 'No, rugby is not an absolute, you've got to take into account certain other considerations'. That was the other 50% They regarded those considerations as paramount, that is to say supposed consideration of race, apartheid etc etc. They regarded those as of paramount importance. The other 50%, the freedom to watch rugby, regardless of any other consideration. That was of paramount importance. So it was these two absolutes, as it were, came into collision. Very strong passions seemed to have been aroused. Even some of our FWBO friends got involved, at least to the extent of going on marches, or taking part in demonstrations. Perhaps we'd better pass on. We could spend the whole morning over any one of these verses, especially if we took the bypaths. Next one, 125?

v.125 "And he who parents strikes,
Doth brother vex with words,
Wife's mother, sister too:

S: So, he is an outcast. Someone who behaves violently with, or even speaks harshly to parents, brother, brother-in-law, sister etc. In other words, someone who is harsh, and rough and violent within the family circle. This is a quite simple and obvious thing. You can't have family life of this sort of basis really, can you. Again it's the sort of behaviour, the conduct, which disrupts a particular kind of social group. A social group which is in principle, at least, a reasonably positive one. I don't know whether you know, or have had any experience of this, that sometimes if the husband or the father is of the harsh, aggressive, quarrelsome, abusive type, it can really play havoc with family life. And make the family, the home, a very unpleasant place to be, with devastating effects upon the children.

[74]

V: It breaks up all communication.

S: Yes. And even more so within a spiritual community. Within a spiritual community, above all, there shouldn't be any violence, there shouldn't be any blows, there shouldn't be harsh speech. Shouldn't be abuse.

V: It seems like an area where a lot of confusion comes in. Strong criticism and harshness mixed up.

S: Right. Yes I think sometimes people confuse the two. There's another thing that I have had in mind to speak about sometime. Perhaps here is not an inappropriate occasion. Which is what one might call crude language within a community. I had a letter from a mitra. Not in this country. I won't mention the name of the country. Another country. And he was quite upset by the amount of, what he regarded as, crude language, within the particular spiritual community that he was living . Even crude language on the part of Order members, that is to say male Order members. And he felt this was completely inappropriate, and I must say I incline to agree with him. He listed all the expletives that were used, the crude, obscene expletives which were used by various male Order members. He felt that these sort of expressions were just not appropriate within a spiritual community. I mean that indicated a completely wrong sort of attitude of the part of the persons concerned. Contributed to creating quite the wrong sort of attitude.

V: But isn't this quite strongly connected with the society you're brought up in? I know probably that New Zealand is a fairly crude society. I think Australia is probably more so. So

when you're operating, and living in that society, the tendency would be to gravitate towards relating in a crude way. You'd be relating to people which were crude, they wouldn't be able to understand or communicate a refined person. To be able to have a one to one. You would have to have a certain amount of crudeness.

[75]

S: But at least you should be sufficiently mindful of what is happening. So as not to bring that kind of communication from the outside world, from the not very positive group, into the spiritual community itself, where it is totally out of place.

V: It's very difficult though, when you're in that society.

S: A spiritual community could be a little oasis.

V: It is, ideally. It's still very difficult to achieve.

V: I find it makes a lot of difference who I'm talking to. Even within the community.

V: I'm not quite sure why.

V: One obviously finds one notices I noticed this very early in life. I must say that I was personally very very sensitive to these sort of things, even as a child. One notices that when these crude expressions are used, there's definitely a crude, not very positive emotion accompanying them. Often used with a certain amount of force of a rather unpleasant kind, which certainly isn't expressive of very positive emotions.

V: I don't know if I agree with you or not. Saying that in a crude society, you have to, to a certain extent, use their own idiom, use the language that people understand, and assume that's going to be a crude language. I know I tend to use crude language when I'm not careful, but I think you're perhaps making the mistake that, it's like an alternative between using a crude language, and an airy refined language that really isn't going to mean anything to someone who comes from the back woods. But you can use a very direct language which is not crude or unpleasant, but can still be quite direct and simple, and not tainted with the airs of Oxbridge and still do ...

S: Because very often the crude language consists to a great extent in the interjection of various expletives which contribute nothing to the sense of what you are actually saying which are merely interruptions to it.

[76]

s: A variation on 'uhh'.

S: Yes, indeed. Anyway I thought I'd just make that point in passing. Because it has been in my mind for some time.

V: Maybe I was wrong, I know it's so difficult and so easy to slip into.

S: Even, I was really sorry to see in certain instances, I hope I'm not revealing any secrets, but reading reportings in Shabda sometimes, even quite undesirable expletives have been

included. And were obviously used in the original reporting in, really they were quite out of place. I'm sorry to say, again at a recent meeting, not a council meeting, but a meeting in which the Order member for some other business purpose but what I was really surprised to find was that lady Order members indulging in these expletives, which I thought quite inappropriate. Because the mental states for which they give expressions is so coarse, and crude and ugly. Quite incompatible with the spiritual community and spiritual life. Even incompatible with the positive group and ordinary, healthy, normal human attitudes. Anyway, perhaps I've given my hint. Sometimes when one knows, I have come to know, or I have heard, that even certain Order members, whom one might have expected to be rather above such things, on occasion in fact do have recourse to extremely crude and coarse language. Quite incompatible with the refined sentiments for which they give expression on other occasions. So let that hint be taken. (laughter)

V: It does seem to be quite contagious.

S: perhaps it's bound up with certain wrong ideas about the nature of masculinity. That's a field perhaps that we don't have time to go into this morning.

V: A lot of karate clubs I go to it's like that. I just refuse to speak to them. I just won't relate to them.

S: Perhaps what I occasionally hear is very, very little in comparison with what there is to be heard.

[77]

V: In that case you're merely missing quantity not quality.

S: Yes right. It's as a famous joke pointed out. You don't need to eat the whole egg in order to know that it's bad. Anyway let's pass on, Oh shall we have a cup of something to drink first.

v.126 "Who, asked about the goal,
Teaches not of the goal,
Counsels concealing it:

S: So, he is an outcast too. So what is this goal. The word here is attha, a-t-t-h-a. This is quite an important word, it corresponds to the Sanskrit artha, a-r-t-h-a. Attha or artha is gain in the widest sense. For instance, in Indian thought generally it is said that there are four goals of human life or four things which can be regarded as goals of human life. First of all there is kamma, that is pleasure. Secondly there is artha or gain. This relates to the whole economic side of life. So there's kama, there's artha and then there is dharma. In this context dharma means righteousness, in the sense of the acquisition of merit so as to ensure a better, future rebirth. And then there is moksha, moksha meaning freedom or liberation from conditioned existence itself, from samsara itself. So kana, artha, dharma and moksha. So it is said that different people take these different things as their aims. Some people go in pursuit of pleasure, whether gross pleasure or refined pleasure, the arts are usually included here. Some people go in pursuit of gain, property, wealth position. Others go in pursuit of righteousness, of dharma, they perform meritorious actions, virtuous deeds. So as to ensure a happy future rebirth. They are the conventionally religious people. Then others go in pursuit of absolute spiritual freedom, they are those who go forth, from the household life, into the life of

homelessness , who go for refuge, or who follow the path of the higher evolution. So in this very well known classification in Indian thought. So also therefore in Hinduism you've got texts dealing with that, you've got kama sutras, you've all heard of the kama sutras I expect. You've also got the artha sutras, probably haven't heard of those, you don't get those on the bookstall. But there are artha sutras dealing with the whole economic and even political aspect [78] of human existence. And then there are the dharma sutras, describing in detail how one should lead a righteous life. They are predominantly ethical and are religious in a more conventional sense.

V: These would be very connected, the last two, surely.

S: Yes, one could say that.

V: One would lead into the others do you think?

S: Well they are all interconnected. It's not that any one follows one or another completely exclusively. It's more a question of the predominant interest. And then there are works dealing with moksha, works dealing with the paths to liberation.

(end of side A)

(start of side B)

S: Originally it meant more like worldly gain, worldly prosperity, worldly good. But it came in early Buddhism, in the Buddha's own teaching, it came to mean the highest good, the highest gain. In other words Nirvana itself, enlightenment itself. Do you see what I mean? In early Buddhism, in the earliest parts of the Pali canon, the Buddha very often speaks of the attha or the artha. The gain, what we might say with a capital G. In other words, as I've said, nirvana or enlightenment. So for this reason there's an ambiguity in the word. It can mean gain, in the ordinary, worldly, material sense, or it can mean gain in the highest sense, in the spiritual sense, of gaining enlightenment or nirvana. So in this particular verse we find something of this ambiguity, and therefore we find different translators giving different translations. Chalmers translates the wastrel, which is his word for vasala, 'asked for counsel, counsels wrong, and cloaks pronouncements in obscurities. So here, counsel about worldly matters, counsel about worldly gain. But Hare translates differently, 'who asked about the goal, teaches not of the goal, counsels concealingly'. Here, goal in the more spiritual sense. So combining these two sorts of interpretations, the verse means something like: if somebody asks you about what is an advantage to them, what would be a gain for them , whether [79] worldly or spiritual, you give them the wrong sort of advice. Not only that, you counsel concealing it that is you advise concealing what is really good for other people. I think actually, it's more the spiritual interpretation which is to be preferred, that is to say the more spiritual interpretation of the word attha. Because don't forget the Buddha is talking to a Brahmin. And the Brahmins had very much the attitude of keeping religious teachings to themselves. Not allowing others to share in them. Making them a sort of professional secret. The Buddha before his final passing away said he did not have the closed fist of the teacher who keeps something back. The Brahmins were always keeping something back, would only part with their knowledge when they were given a fee, when they were given a present. So it's probably this sort of thing that the Buddha has in mind. 'Who asked about the goal, teaches not of the goal, counsels concealing it'. So you might have a Brahmin, a sort of spiritual

teacher, someone comes to him, asks him for spiritual advice, asks him about the goal, asks him what he should do with his life, how he should lead his life, but the Brahmin, the sort of spiritual teacher, maybe a false spiritual teacher, doesn't really give him the proper advice, he doesn't really want to point out what is to his advantage, he wants to keep it to himself, perhaps only part with that advice only for the sake of a fee, only for the sake of a present.

V: Was it that he might be lesser than the other person.

S: Yes indeed.

V: I've heard it in that way was well.

S: That you keep something back.

V: You'd be greater.

S: You're greater. Because you know something that other people don't know. So the general situation is where, out of pure selfishness and self-interest, you keep back, from another Person. something which would be to their advantage. You don't [80] give them the advice that they need, for selfish reasons of your own. Of course if you were to speak about the goal in this sense, it suggests that you know the goal. But one must bear in mind that you can't really know the goal, in a spiritual sense, in this sort of way. It would be quite absurd to speak of someone who knew about the goal in the highest sense, and knew about nirvana because he'd experienced it, realized it but at the same time had this self-interested attitude. That sort of attitude would be quite incompatible with the realization of nirvana. But one might have a sort of traditional religious knowledge in a scholarly sort of a way, and be unwilling to impart it, even though it was going to be to some one's benefit, for purely selfish reasons. Again -don't forget the Buddha is speaking to a Brahmin, is speaking to someone engaged in a vedic ritual, and the Brahmins did tend to keep the knowledge of these rituals, and the way in which they were to be performed, to themselves. Because often they were called upon by kings, to perform rituals for the benefit of the king, for the prosperity of the king, the prosperity of the kingdom, only the Brahmins knew how to perform these rituals. That knowledge was a closely guarded trade secret as it were.

V: It's what made them greater than everyone else.

S: Yes, it made them greater than everybody else, people believed that they had these powers, at least they had the knowledge to perform these very efficacious rituals, on which perhaps the prosperity, and welfare of the kingdom or country depended. So they weren't going to impart that sort of knowledge easily to others. They'd only impart that sort of knowledge to Brahmins usually, and then only in return for a substantial fee. So one might say, really generalizing here, that the outcast is one who keeps back for himself alone something which could be useful to other people, beneficial to other people, even when asked about that. You encounter this in all sorts of ordinary ways. Even let's say in the sphere of [81] carpentry. There might be a very skilled carpenter, but he's not very keen on letting you know the tricks of the trade, he wants to keep a few things to himself, doesn't want you to get too good. Have you ever come up against that?

V: Keep it to the trade, yes.

V: You don't let people in the outside world know it, otherwise they'd do it themselves.

v: The chefs used to have trade secrets if they had to make particular things, they'd never tell each other. They used to go into a little room and do it.

Lalitaratna I've seen in offices, somebody keeping a certain area of work secret. So that their position is secure. So you could never replace them.

S: I say this going on at a very tender age when I was, as you

know, in local government service from 16 to 18, at the County Hall. I saw this, I've written about it in the suppressed chapters of my autobiography. It was amazing. People used to lose files. People used to take files out of the filing system and keep them on their own desk, even when others were hunting and searching for those files, not say anything about the fact that they had the files, because the sort of office etiquette was you never interfered with anybody else's desk. You weren't supposed to touch anybody else's desk. And some people, I'm afraid it was some of the women who were cleaning that general office, well one woman in particular, who was, who did clearly feel her position a bit shaky, and feel the need of strengthening it, because she belonged to a technical grade and not the clerical grade, and shouldn't have been there in this office, she used to do this on a grand scale. She used to have quite vital files on her desk and not say anything about it, while other people were looking for them. In that way she tried to bring thing under her own control. It was extraordinary. I used to study this, I used to watch it, from the other side of the corridor, where my office was. One really saw this sort [82] of thing going on. And if letters arrived, quietly to attach them to the file and not say anything to anybody else. Even though that was quite a regular procedure. Or even I've known, these sort of people break up a pile into two piles, and put one half back into the filing system, and keep the other half, the more vital half, on their own desk. So someone would think that they had the whole file and deal with the case accordingly, when in fact they didn't have the whole file and would come a cropper. Because they'd taken the wrong sort of decision on the basis of inadequate information. I really saw what went on in local government service, and I imagine the civil service generally.

Lalitaratna This was the civil service where I saw it.

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V: It doesn't concern these people that there's members of the public, whose lives can be wrecked.

S: Oh no. Of no interest whatever. It's quite irrelevant to their little inter-office or inter-departmental politics. You see this in academic life too, don't you? So this verse has a very wide and even topical applicability. You keep knowledge to yourself, for purely selfish reasons, instead of sharing it with other people for whom it would be beneficial. Not only that you counsel concealing it, you counsel presumably your peers, your fellow workers, your mates. You don't want to let the secret go out of your own hands. (long pause) Let's go on to the next verse 127. Who would like to read that?

v.127 "Who doing devil deeds,
Hopes none may know of them,

Who acteth covertly:

S: Yes, he also is an outcast, he also is a vasala. This is quite simple and straightforward.
Who doing evil deeds,

hopes none may know of them who acteth covertly'. Chalmers translates 'the wastrel hopes his villainies will not be known as his and thitherly proceeds. You always hope that other people will not find out, if you do something which is evil [83] on the quiet. But they almost always do. You may put your hand into the till, you may juggle the accounts, you hope that no one may find out. Even nowadays people are doing all sorts of complicated things with computers. Computers have become accomplices in crime. Sometimes it takes months and months to unravel all the villainies that have been committed, but it comes out in the end more often than not. Also another thing is that if you do things secretly, you cut yourself off from other people. Do you see what I mean?

V: You're setting up tendencies aren't you?

V: Lank of communication and openness.

S: Yes. It could be the case of a man who is embezzling money at the office. Can't even tell his own wife. Maybe the wife guesses there is something on his mind. There's something he's not telling her, but she can't make out what it is. Maybe she asks him if there's anything on his mind. He says, 'No of course not'. So there's a sort of separation between them, the full confidence that should exist, at least on that sort of level between husband and wife, is no longer there. I ought to go back to the example we mentioned a little while ago. If you're having an affair with your friend's wife you can't talk to him about it. You can't be open. Because you're going off secretly. SO you can't be honest with him. You start leading a double life, a Jekyll and Hyde sort of existence, and that can be a very dangerous thing to do. It can eventually result in a split in your own personality.

Darren More like tearing yourself in half.

S: Yes.

Darren Rather than a split.

S: Sometimes you read about politicians who've in fact been leading a double life for many many years. And eventually they're found out. Their career lies in ruins.

[84]

Lalitaratna 'The ideal husband' by Oscar Wilde is all about a politician who gains success, on a fiddle, very early. So for 20 years of married life he'd held a secret. And it all got exposed at the end, and the emotion was relieved. Everybody became friends at the end of 20 years of marriage. This woman blackmailed everybody but the truth finally came out.

S: Well this introduces the topic of confession, that the confession is just the opposite, that you bring out what had been concealed. Very often it is something unskilful that you've done that you conceal from other people. And there is a relief when you can start talking about it, and sharing that guilty little secret with others. And maybe you find it's not as bad as you

thought. Maybe you weren't as/you thought. I remember there's a little story in this connection that I sometimes tell. I haven't told it for several years. (general laughter) There's one of our friends in the very early days, within the first year or so, a few years before the FWBO had even started. And he and I became quite friendly, we shared a common interest in poetry. One day he said to me, 'if you knew what I was really like you wouldn't want to be friends with me. You wouldn't even want to know me. I'm not what you think I am. I'm really much worse.' So I thought what on earth could it be that he'd been up to? Anyway, I sort of coaxed him, and coaxed him, and I think it took me, off and on, about a year to get this out of him, with great difficulty. He kept saying, 'well no, I can't tell you. If I told you, you'd never want to have anything to do with me, it's so bad.' What, has he committed a murder. The way he was speaking really sounded as though he had at least committed a murder. He said, 'No I just can't tell you, you'd just break off connections with me at once, you'd never speak to me again.' But anyway I got it out of him at last. It was that he had a certain little fantasy, which he indulged. The fantasy was that he went down the road, down the street, and he entered every house in turn. and raped all the women in it.

[85]

V: Quite common. (laughter)

S: That was his fantasy. And he indulged this fantasy, and he felt really bad about it, felt really guilty, that he was really so wicked, so evil and that if I knew this, I'd be so utterly disgusted that I just wouldn't want anything more to do with him. But when he told me this I just burst out laughing. Of course he was quite relieved, and then we both laughed about it, and he realized, it wasn't really so bad, and didn't make him so evil etc etc. It meant that he came to terms with it. But clearly it was a great relief to him to be able to mention, he'd never spoken about this to anybody else, he'd never told anybody that he'd had these fantasies. So sometimes when you confess something that is really weighing on your mind, and you really think is bad; sometimes it may be something which is objectively really quite unskilful, but on the other hand, it may be something that you've exaggerated, you've taken it too seriously. And then having confessed. you get that reassurance from your good friends. That it's not such an unskilful thing really, looking at it quite objectively. You've given far too much weight, far too much importance to that particular little incident, or in this case, that thought or that fantasy. So you as a result of confessing can also see things more objectively, put things more into perspective. And of course, get encouragement, and psychological and even spiritual support for doing better in the future. In the Buddha's preaching generally, concealment of what one has done is regarded as a quite serious matter. Obviously we usually tend to conceal what we feel is unskilful. So not to confess whatever one feels to be unskilful so that one can get over that, so that one can transcend it, and get oneself on to a more positive path, if there's anything weighing on one's mind.

So this is one of the most important functions of the spiritual friend. to receive one's confessions as it were.

V: It's more also, of accepting parts of yourself. In that case it was more accepting a part of him that had that desire in that way. For you to accept him, and for him to accept it as well.

[86]

S: Accept the part that has the fantasies at least. Not encourage him to put his fantasies into ...

V: Yes, well just accept that there's no way, (general laughter)

S: I won't go so far to say it doesn't matter what you do provided you confess it. But there's a certain amount of truth in that provided you what you do isn't too flagrantly unskilful.

V: I would say it's more important to be open in that way. yes.

S: So there must be at least 1 or 2 other people with whom you are in sufficiently close contact, in sufficiently good communication, that you feel you can just say anything to them, tell them anything, and that they're not going to be shocked. They may even disapprove, or they may even say, 'you just shouldn't have done that. It was bad that you did it.' But you'll know, nonetheless, that you will not forfeit their friendship, they will stand by you, and give you their moral, and psychological and spiritual support, despite the fact that you've done something unskilful. If anything, they'll give it more than ever, because they'll realize you need that sort of support, so that you can overcome your tendency to act in that particular unskilful way.

V: It really reinforces the previous stanzas. Because there is going to be no one with whom you are in such a relation, if you've been seducing their wives, or denying repayment of debts to them, or the other way round.

S: Right, you're going to have no friends left. No one's going to trust you anyway. This is a criterion of friendship. You can ask yourself perhaps what is it that I could not tell that person, or could tell that person. And from that you can understand or gauge the degree of your friendship. Someone might say that even when anyone sits down to write his autobiography, the first thing he thinks of is all the things he's not going to tell. So in the same way, when someone says, I want to be completely open with you, I want to be completely frank actually there's very often a mental reservation You [87] say, I'm going to be completely frank, but I'm not going to mention such and such. So the more things that you should have mental reservations about, obviously the less the degree of frankness, the less the degree of friendship. If you just look around amongst your friends, you might think, well I couldn't tell that person such and such, I couldn't tell that person something else, But ask yourself if there someone from whom I wouldn't hold anything back, I could tell them absolutely anything at all. Whereas if you don't have such and such a person, such a friend, then you're really missing out something which is perhaps essential to human, spiritual development.

V: It's impossible to tell everybody, and be completely open with everyone, and ...

S: They have to know you pretty well to understand what you are saying, and its importance for this. Sometimes you may feel something is very important, well bothered about it, and you try to talk to someone about it, and they just say, 'don't bother, that's all right, don't worry about that.' They take it so lightly, that they don't realize its seriousness for you. They don't realize that you are bothered about that. That that's an important issue for you. They don't empathize with you to that extent. They're not a friend of yours to that extent. So it isn't just a question of uttering words, it's a question of finding a really receptive ear, a really listening ear.

V: And Someone who's prepared to stick with you, that's the feeling I get. Even if he is taken

back a bit, and quite shocked, at least he's not going to walk out.

S: He's going to maybe take you to task very severely, and be very annoyed with you, and tell you you've been an absolute fool and an idiot, and really stupid. But nevertheless you know he's going to stand by you. And is going to help you get over it if he possibly can. So that's the sort of friend you need. At the very least one such friend, otherwise you really are alone in the world. So this verse deals with the opposite sort of situation, a situation of someone who conceals, the evil that he's committed, and who hopes that no one will ever know. All right, on to 128.

[88]

v.128 "Who goes to other's house
And eats of his choice food
Nor honours him in turn:

S: You really need that little refrain don't you. It seems to stop doesn't it? Tun genya vasala edi. 'The wastrel gladly shares another's feast, but when his host calls, offers no return.' This is something like the one who, having gone to another's family/house, enjoys his good food, literally pure food, yet, when he is paid a returned visit, does not honour in return. Know him as an outcast. In Indian tradition, in Indian society, in Indian culture, a great importance and value is attached to hospitality. Especially if you're supposed to be friends with someone. You go to his house, he entertains you, he feeds you really well, gives you of his best. But when he comes to your house, you don't honour him in return. It's interesting that the word for honour is puja. Indians don't distinguish as much as we do between honouring and worshipping. So if, when he comes to your house, you don't receive him as an honoured guest, and don't think ...

V: There's even an offering implied.

S: Right. Yes. You don't entertain him in turn, then you are an outcast, you're a vasala, you're a despicable person. So this is quite basic, this is quite simple, but what does it suggest. What does the broad principle involved here? Well, one could say it's reciprocity. It's a question of friendship. You treat your friend in the same way that he treats you. You don't fall short. He's good to you, you're good to him. He helps you, you help him. He entertains you, you entertain him. Maybe one shouldn't place too much emphasis on this particular kind of situation. It's reciprocity it's mutuality, which is being emphasized. That's an essential, an integral part of friendship.

V: It's like a bond or a contract almost.

S: Yes. You have the same feeling towards him as he has towards you. It's not one sided. You don't take advantage of him. You don't take advantage of the friendship. You don't exploit the [89] friendship. You give in return. But not in return. You just have a natural feeling to give. Just as he has a natural feeling to give to you. He gives what he can, you give what you can. You don't keep any record, you don't keep any sort of account. In ordinary social life, you do. In families, husbands and wives, you would hear people say well dear, they've invited us twice, we haven't invited them back. We really have to, even if we don't like it, we'd better invite them. Otherwise what would they think. So you have to keep a tally in ordinary social life, they've invited you so many times, you have invited them so many times. You went to

this Aunt about Christmas, so you've got to go to the other aunt next Christmas. All that sort of thing. But between friends there's no sort of social book-keeping of that sort. There's a free flow of reciprocal goodwill, reciprocal friendly treatment. You paid for his cinema ticket last week so he's got to pay for yours this week. He probably will, but not because of any idea of book-keeping. You don't have to make your accounts balance, they balance anyway, spiritually.

V: We've got so much into the idea that everyone pays for their own things nowadays, a lot more. We've got on to a bad habit there. Everyone paying their own way.

S: Well that is good in a way. Where in the absence of close friendship, you've got a sense of self responsibility, and self respect. But where close friendship is concerned, there's no question of each one paying his own way. That sort of distinction is transcended by the fact of the friendship itself. You shouldn't hesitate to accept a hundred quid from your friend, because if you are friends you share in that sort of way. You shouldn't feel under an obligation, if your friend is willing to give you a hundred pounds. You should not feel that. Otherwise it means there's no deep friendship between you. You want to preserve a sort of sense of separateness. (pause) So the verse is concerned with equal treatment between friends. With the fact that genuine friendship and especially spiritual friend ship involves an attitude of reciprocity, mutuality and sharing and positive feeling. I think one of the saddest features of modern western social life is the fact that when a man [90] marries, he virtually is expected to give up his friends. In fact he often gives them a farewell party, the so called stag night.

V: That was really driven home with 'love and addiction'. The betrayal of friends as soon as you have a meaningful relation ship.

V: I found when I was in a relationship or especially when I got married, the exchange of gifts was a lot less. Before being married and going out, you don't always if you're buying gifts, think more of your partner in that way. But then getting married, there's no exchange of giving.

S: Well the attitude is why go on baiting the hook when the fish has already been swallowed. (laughter) Don't bother about the bait any more. Your fishing days are over, she's in the net, she's in the bag.

V: And the feelings of being able to give to other people were stronger, other women and other friends, was a stronger feeling than the person you were living with. It seemed to fade away.

V: The romance goes out of it all.

S: You've gone on to a slightly different aspect of the question. But what you said is nonetheless true of course ...

V: Of giving.

S: Yes.

V: Of giving in a relationship.

S: Because if that's what you say. If truth suggests that your giving formally was quite interested. That you had almost a selfish motive.

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V: It can apply with our own friends, between men. You can take that other person for granted after while. It's so easy to start off the friendship, it goes so far and they'll be generous giving between each other. But when say, when you've known him for a year, it tails off, fades away. The exchange.

S: Well there is that well known saying or proverb even that one should keep one's friendship in good repair. Otherwise they do get a bit rusty.

V: They do quite quickly.

S: And one of the ways in which you keep your friendships in good repair, is by giving presents, writing letters. If your friend goes away and he's on his own, and you don't even bother to write to him for a year. What happens to the friendship?

V: They have something to maintain in that way.

S: And if not maintained, they may well tend to deteriorate. If not active in maintaining it.

V: It does vary. Because I have met some people, like Manjuvajra when he came over, it was like there'd been no time between us, when we met again. From when he had departed though we hadn't seen each other for a year. It's like he'd just walked out the room and came back in again. And yet I don't suppose there'd been even that much thought, just from time to time. It does vary.

S: Anyway let's move on. Verse 129.

v.129 Who with false words deceives

A Brahman or recluse

Or other mendicant:

S: He is the outcast. The text says Yu Brahman wots sramana wots, he who Brahman sramana or other wandering person. Brahman representing the more, let's use the word orthodox, sort of religious person and then the sramana, the more unconventional, the wanderer, [92] representing the wanderer who is maybe not even a religious person, just a tramp. He who, deceives or misleads with false words any of those people, then he is an outcast. So first of all he is an outcast who misleads one might say religious people. But why should that be so particularly bad. Again it's another aspect of something we've already discussed several times. It's a sort of breach of what should be the normal relationship between you and them. They are leading a religious life of or spiritual life, in one way or another. They are perhaps more highly developed than you are. So your attitude towards them should be one of receptivity, one of helpfulness. But if it is not that, if you mislead them if for instance they just ask you the way, ask you for some guidance, in their wanderings, if you mislead, since they are after all religious people, since they are following the spiritual path and represent so to speak the spiritual life for you, the fact that you can mislead them means there's a serious alienation on your part from whatever spiritual life represents.

V: Your feeling towards them must be a bad one, to be dishonest.

V: Even just people who are ordinary wanderers, even tramps, to mislead them also is not good. Because that almost suggests an alienation from ordinary humanity itself. The normal, the natural thing is to want to help a wanderer, or traveller, help at least with good advices Help at least with directions. You notice that sometimes if someone is just enquiring the way, some people don't want to bother, whereas others will almost go out of their way to be helpful, and even take you somewhere. Show you where it is, and suddenly you see a very great difference between people in this respect, in respect of their attitudes.

V: It is encouraging, a helpful open generous person, isn't it? And discouraging the opposite to that.

S: So if you're not even helpful with regards to Brahmans and sramanas that is to say religious people who are conventional or unconventionally religious, you aren't really very open [93] or receptive to spiritual values themselves.

Lalitaratna Bhante, I've seen a point here. About the types of relationships a person can be in. I've heard it said that, maybe in ancient Greece, a man would maybe have a relationship with a teacher, and a different type of relationship with a wife, and another relationship with a lover, a man, a relationship with a boy. So you had all these different relationships.

S: This comes up clearly in the Buddha's Sigolavada Sutta, where he describes the relationship between employer and employee, between friend and friend, husband and wife, parents and children. In other words it is recognized it's accepted that in your life you have a multiplicity of relationships. There's no overloading of any one particular relationship.

V: As in marriage.

S: Whereas in our society, in our culture, we overload, usually the relationship between husband and wife, or between boyfriend and girlfriend. It's very overloaded, and always carries the whole weight of our relationships. Different societies, different cultures seem to emphasize different relationships more or less as the case may be. So I think in traditional societies there is a healthy spread of relationships. Usually you have your wife, you have your children, you have your parents. You've strong positive healthy relationships with all of them. But also with your friends, your relationship with your friends is no less strong, no less important to you. Your relationship with your teacher, whether secular teacher or spiritual teacher that's also very very important. Your relationship with the people you work for or work with, that's very very important. It's interesting that when we speak of a relationship we usually take it

Lalitaratna I'm having a relationship.

S: Yes. of a Particular kind.

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V: It really seems as if that's the only relationship you have, and that language almost implies.

S: So that negates the importance of the other relationships and therefore negates, or at least

devalues, undervalues. Many other important areas of your life. But your work is important, certainly in a man's life, his work is very important. His relationship with the people for whom or with whom he works is very very important is a big part of his life. He puts a lot of himself into it. It can have under ideal conditions, a very great value for him.

V: I suppose you could argue that for a woman the opportunity's even better because she has all the possible relationships a man can have plus that special relationship of a mother with her children.

S: One could say that. Though of course the father has a relationship with the children though it's different from the mother's. Maybe the father's relationship becomes more important as the children get older, especially as the sons get older, and come much more under the father's influence, much more into contact with him, and spend more time with him, then with the mother. And he comes into his own, then comes into its own.

V: Why don't you think it's more important. Girls and boys. The father, son?

S: Well the son is after all a male he is more like the father.

He is more akin to the father. His line of development will be much more like the father's and so the father can take him along with him, to places where it wouldn't perhaps be very appropriate to take a daughter. Introduce him to his male friends and so on.

(end of cassette 3)

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S: ... learning about cars...

Bernie: So you think that the girls would be happier, you think, with their mothers

S: I think so yes. In a normal, healthy society. Boys, certainly, after a certain age are happier with their fathers. Presuming the fathers to be positive individuals. Boys like to associate with their fathers. It's just a great pity that in our society, sons have very often negative feelings towards their fathers. They're missing out on so much. It is a very natural, easy and enjoyable way of learning about things, by being around your father. Having your father introduce you to life, to the world. Introduce you to his own friends.

Bernie Tisch: I can remember it quite clearly. It made you feel quite important in a way. Being introduced to a real man.

Dharmapriya: But one feels it is something inimical in our high population density cities against that. Until I was ten my father came home for lunch every day because he was within walking distance. And I remember being really shocked to hear that parents of most of my friends, their fathers did not come home for lunch, because they worked down town. And they couldn't. It just filled me with a certain amount of fear on hearing that; quite unnatural. The reason I mention it is if say, you are in an urban situation where the father commutes, how much will the son ever see of him.

Bernie: I used to go out to work with my father so it was great. Being able to get off

school, 'wag' school, and go out to work with my father.

S: Well that seems more natural in a way.

Bernie: It was really enjoyable. Help him carry his traps, walking across the fields carry junk

Lalitaratna: Bhante, I can see the outcast e merging now. Because the text, the breach of trust is happening with each relationship. He is becoming an outcast as he goes on.

S: Well this is continued in the next verse, maybe we should read that.

v.130 "Who Brahmin or recluse
vexes with words
and gives them nought
when food they beg.

S: So this carries on from the previous verse. You're still concerned with Brahmins and recluses. Brahmanas and Sramana as. Here you are not

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S: misleading them, you are vexing them, annoying them with harsh words and by refusing to help them by giving them food when they come begging to your door. So this suggests again, a breach of a natural relationship, a normal relationship. Because within the context of ancient Indian society, even within the context of .modern Indian society to some extent still, it was the natural and the normal and the right and the proper thing to support those who were leading a full-time religious or full-time spiritual life and who depended upon you for alms. Again if you refused to support them, it did represent on your part within the context of that particular society, a sort of repudiation of all spiritual values. So again, a breach would be set up. Not just a breach between you and those particular people, but between you and those particular values, those particular spiritual values which they for you even represented. The outcast is the individualist. (pause)

The Pali says that when Brahmanas and Sramanas appear, or are present at meal times, then he who instead of giving them anything simply abuses them, he is the outcast, he is the Vasala, he is the despicable person.

Bernie: It seems like there is a very strong emphasis on giving and generosity through these last few verses, quite a few of them. An outward going thing.

S: This is connected with another quite interesting idea in Indian thought generally, but more especially Hindu thought, Hindu belief. The idea of paying one's debts. The idea that you have got a debt to society, a debt to your family, a debt even to your teachers which you have to repay. Because you repay the debt to your family by marrying and producing a son. You pay your debt to your parents by honouring their memory after death etc, etc. So one may question the particular details, but this idea of having a debt of being indebted to others, to your society, this can be quite healthy and quite a positive idea.

Bernie: It is very strong in the Chinese culture and society.

S: Yes indeed. The modern attitude in a way is very alienated. The attitude that, "well, I didn't ask to be born. So what do I owe ? I don't owe anybody anything". This doesn't suggest freedom and independence, this suggest alienation.

Darren: But surely if that very strong, it could stop individuals from doing what they feel and feel obligated to fill that debt

S: Yes, well clearly one must recognize that there is a debt. But [97] how you discharge that debt must be left to you. When Buddhism went to China there was a great conflict set up, at least to some extent, between the values of Buddhism, and the values of the traditional Chinese society. Because the Chinese also thought that a man should marry and produce children. A man should serve the Emperor. So what about the monk? What about the man who didn't marry, who didn't have children, the man who didn't serve the Emperor, the man who didn't take part in the administration? Well, eventually they worked out a sort of compromise, that you honoured your parents by being a monk. Because you prayed for them after death. You served the Emperor by being a monk, because you prayed for the long life and prosperity of the Emperor and the Kingdom. This is putting it quite crudely, but some such compromise was worked out.

For instance in India, Bhikkhus never greet or salute lay people. They never bow to lay people. But for the Chinese, the idea of not bowing to the Emperor was unthinkable. But from a Buddhist point of view, the Emperor was a lay person, so how could the Bhikkhu bow to him. So there was a head on conflict. So eventually they worked out a typically Chinese compromise. That the Bhikkhu honours the Emperor by not bowing to him. (laughter)

So you recognize that you have a debt to society, you recognize you have an obligation to society. But you don't necessarily repay that by totally identifying yourself with the interests of society. You can discharge your debt, you can express your gratitude, say for the gift of life, by resolving to spread the Dharma. You will give people the very best that you have got. You will share the Dharma itself with them. You will more than discharge your debt to society in that way. Then society in fact will be in your debt. The positions will be reversed.

Dharmapriya: In a sense, it is like you do not necessarily have to conform to the group's norms to actually support the group in a positive ways their norms will very likely be wrong.

S: Exactly. You may even have to oppose the group in the interests the ultimate interests, the true interests of the group. As when you fight against injustice, even though the whole of your society is identified with that injustice, but you stand alone and you oppose it.

Anyway we have come on to Verse 130, but we have still have a little bit to do, and it is one o'clock. So what shall we do, leave it there, or have another hour after lunch. So We'll have another hour... [98] We've finished Verse 130 , so let's carry on to verse 131. There is something that occurred to me just after we'd stopped. The point was made that many of these verses are concerned with breach of human relations, breach of trust, breach within society, breach within the family. And the outcast man, the Vasala, the truly despicable person is seen as the person who is guilty of that sort of breach. I suggested that he might be called the individualist. So this reminded me of something, this connected up for me with some of the things with which I was concerned in India. They are very much in my mind because I have been editing the transcripts of some of my Indian lectures.

And in one of my lectures, in Poona, I was concerned with Sila, the basis of the new society. And I quoted a saying of Dr Ambedkar. Dr Ambedkar being of course the leader of the Ex-Untouchables. It was under his guidance that they became Buddhists. I quoted a saying of his to the effect that-I think he says: "religion in the sense of morality is the sanction of society"; that society cannot exist without morality. He says, "force is not enough to hold society together. Society can be held together only by morality" You can employ, according to him, a certain amount of violence within society, in order to keep in check, to keep in order those people who are not kept in order by morality, who do not accept the sanction of morality, but the majority of people in the society, in a state, have to accept the sanction of morality. You cannot keep all the people in society, all the people in a state in order simply by force. The majority have to accept morality, the sanction of morality. Therefore without morality there is in fact no social life, there is no society there is no human community. Do you see the sort of thing he was getting at? This is why according to him, Buddhism was so necessary. You couldn't just exist without a religion. Having given up Hinduism, you have to adopt another religion, and he chose to adopt Buddhism. Because without religion at least in the sense of morality, there would be no social life even.

So therefore, one might say, developing that, say, along the lines we were thinking of this morning, -along the lines we were following this morning; breach of morality is a breach of society itself. That is to say taking society in a more ideal sense, in a more normal sense, in a more normative sense, as society in the sense of the positive group. So morality is not just a question of your personal morality. It is not just a question of yourself personally, [99] avoiding unskillful action for your own personal sake. There is this sort of social other-regarding, group-oriented, positive group-oriented aspect of morality in the moral life. In as much as if you are guilty of a breach of morality in the sense that we've been discussing it this morning, if you are guilty of a breach of sila, not only does that have a harmful effect upon you personally, but it constitutes a breach in the fabric of society itself. So morality is doubly important. It is important for you as an ethical individual, an individual who is trying to grow and develop and it is important also for society as a whole. And it does seem that this particular aspect of morality has come out, or come forward rather prominently in the verses that we've been considering. That if you are an outcast if you are a vasala, your actions, the actions that you perform, not only result in your personal degradation, but also bring about some weakening of the fabric of society itself. In as much as they weaken the feelings of trust and confidence between the members of-that society, or with certain members of that society.

Dharmapriya: What you're saying suggests in fact ... I mean I've always understood the 'other-regarding' aspect, in a sense, is a care or love or interest in other individuals, as individuals, but you're suggesting, it seems to me, also that it's a care for others as group members.

S: Not just that but a care for those positive structures of society or in society which help sustain the individual and help even the individual to be an individual, or at least don't make it more difficult for him to be an individual.

Bernie Tisch: Especially the morality aspect of society.

S: Yes. For instance, if you're concerned with children, you're not only concerned with children as individuals, you're concerned with the educational structures within which they will receive their education. You have to ensure that those structures are as positive and

helpful as possible. It's not sufficient to be concerned with the needs of the individual child independent of the structures within which the child will be brought up. You need to concern yourself with the nature of those structures as structures.

Darren de Witt: It's getting a much bigger picture; a much broader picture, in fact.

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S: Yes. Structure is important, organization is important. It's as though, for many people - especially some of our hippie and ex-hippy friends, organization is a dirty word. But it need not be because organization means structure and it's not possible for a number of people to do things together without structure, unless they are highly developed spiritual beings and can communicate sort of telepathically like flocks of birds, on a much higher level. In the absence of that sort of communication, you need common structures structures which are not ends in themselves, structures which definitely subserve spiritual ends which serve the individual, help the individual.

Darren: It's really difficult especially with children, - you're talking about them having to grow up in society as it is now and you're feeling horrified almost to send your child to school or into that society. You'd prefer them not to have to go to school at all, to keep them at home. You can't do that either, gives them no structure.

S: You have to follow a Middle Way really. You have to, as it were, protect your child from the worst features of the existing group but not protect him so much that he's unable to function in that group at all because if you do that you just cut him off, you'll alienate him. You won't make him much more of an individual merely by cutting him off from the existing group, from the existing society. He'll have at least to have minimal contact with it. So to the extent that he has contact with it, he should be able to function within it. Do you see what I mean?

Darren: Yes, You don't just let him go and take responsibility for his life. You discriminate quite a lot for the child.

S: Yes. Because also, if you keep the child away from school supposing in New Zealand you could do this sort of thing: get a cottage in the bush and you're just there growing your own food, you keep the kids with you. They grow up, maybe they're quite healthy little animals, but what then are they going to do after you're dead and gone?

Bernie: What's very common in New Zealand is that parents teach the children and it's quite within the law. It's quite legal now to bring up your own children, educate them.

S: Well, in some parts of England, in Norfolk, one can do this but not in most other counties. If you're qualified, that is, if you have sufficient educational qualifications, you're allowed to [101] educate your child at home, but there's still a certain amount of supervision, because inspectors can still come and check that your child has been or is being educated by you, up to the requisite standard. I gather, with some it's a matter of practice - in Norfolk, that doesn't constitute any difficulty. The inspectors are quite sympathetic. But in most other counties in England; that's just impossible. But even so, even if you educate the child sufficiently, well, what is education? Is it simply communicating facts to the individual child? I mean, isn't relating with other children, with other members of your peer group also a part of education?

Having to deal with society, being able to survive in society? That should also be part of your education.

Darren: One incident I know of, where the young girl was not going to school and when she did start to get out into the world, it's like her moral standards were quite weakened, and she had no sort of respect, I suppose for the morality of society. It was like she knew nothing of it in a way. There was nothing wrong with taking things, stealing...

S: Of course, she'd be able to help herself to anything that was around the house...

Darren: It wasn't even like that...

S: so she took it that the world was like a great big house.

Darren: It wasn't as healthy as that. (Laughter) It was more a lack of respect. I suppose she would have known that it was wrong. Anyway, I mean, it's quite common isn't it, even if you do go to school.

S: Anyway, that was just an introductory point There was this other aspect of morality. Morality, necessary not only to the development of the individual but for the maintenance of society, the maintenance of the positive group itself. (Till true being of course, takes place). Anyway, someone like to read verse...

v.131 "Know him as outcast too
Who in delusion wrapt
Telleth of things untrue.
Eager to get a fee."

S: Hm. So the Buddha says here: He who wrapt in delusion, announces or proclaims things which are not true because he covets some trifle, know him as a Vasala. The suggestion is perhaps that the Buddha has in mind, sort of fortune-telling like people. People that tell you that your good luck is coming, so 'Don't worry, deary! Every [102] thing will be all right!'. Who don't really know what they're talking about. They tell you perhaps very confidently about things which are perhaps completely false or which they've no means of knowing about. Just for the sake of some gain.

Here again there's a bit of a hit at the Brahmins, because the Brahmins very often did that sort of thing. Brahmins engaged in all sorts of fortune-telling activities; even some of their rituals were of this nature. There were certain rituals, by performing which, someone could send another person to heaven, say, after their death or ensure their prosperity. So the Buddha was not in agreement with all that sort of thing.

So here, one, for the sake of gain, for the sake of a livelihood almost, tells people things which are untrue, trades on their ignorance, trades on their credulity. There's a good example of this in Western history, in connection with the Reformation. This question of Indulgences - what was an Indulgence? Indulgence was a piece of paper, a document sealed by the Pope or sealed by the appropriate official of the Vatican anyway. To the effect that so many years or a certain amount of time spent in purgatory by a certain person was remitted on payment of a certain amount of money, on purchase of this particular Indulgence. This is what an

Indulgence was.

Supposing your father died. You suspected that they were in purgatory and their actions had doomed them to purgatory say, for 10,000 years. Well, you could purchase remission of that according to the amount you paid - either 10,000 years remission, 20,000 years remission or even the whole 100,000 years remission. So that that person, as soon as you bought the Indulgence, would be released from purgatory and go to heaven. So there was this trade in Indulgences going on and Pope Leo X was raising money to pay for the building of St. Peter's Church in Rome by the sale of Indulgences. And he handed over the whole business as regards Germany to wealthy bankers who were not even Christians, who were in fact Jews; the (Feuger?) family and they, in return for a percentage, arranged for these Indulgences to be hawked around Germany and it was because Luther Martin Luther - was so outraged by this whole business that eventually the Reformation came about.

This is a rather potted version of Reformation history, but you see the point that I'm making. That the Pope was professing to do something which really, one might say, he knew absolutely nothing about. He was proclaiming a falsehood - that he, by means of this document - or you by means of your purchase of that document - could free the souls in purgatory and apparently there's a little jingle, [103] that the people who hawked around the Indulgences used to recite in German when they gave their Spiel. - You might know it in German but in English it's translated as 'Soon as the money in cash box rings, the soul from purgatory springs'. (Laughter) As soon as you pay down the money, as soon as you purchase that document, that Indulgence, out of purgatory pops the soul of your father, or your friend or brother or whatever. So this is what the Catholic Church had been reduced to in Luther's time. (Laughter)

Vajrananda: I suppose on a more subtle level, you've got to just watch that with everything that you do, in everyday life (S: Yes) not cutting corners or kidding people along.

S: Yes, you mustn't make, as it were, false promises. You mustn't say things which you know to be untrue. For instance, supposing someone comes along to a meditation class. Supposing for the sake of argument they've got cancer and they ask you: "If we come along to an FWBO meditation class, do you think that will cure our cancer?" And supposing you say: "Well yes, of course it will" - just to get them along. You might think it's a skilful means but actually you've told them a lie. In a way you're getting them along on false pretences. Actually you're exploiting them. At the most you can say, "Well, the interaction between mind and body is very mysterious. We do know cases of illnesses being cured by meditation. It is not impossible that cancer can be cured by means of meditation, but we can't make any sort of promise. If you practise meditation, certainly your mental state will become better. Certainly it will help you in a general way. Whether it will have any effect directly on the cancer, we can't say."

You have to be honest and speak in those sort of terms. But many so-called religious teachers, so-called spiritual teachers and gurus, they create a following by making these sort of false promises and fairly often it's not possible to verify whether the promise has been fulfilled or not. Because supposing it isn't. The teacher may say: "Well, you just didn't have enough faith. You've got to have more faith, then certainly I promise it will come about. It's your fault. You've let me down by not having enough faith."

Keith Mitchell: This particular verse suggests that the person giving the information is deluded. He doesn't really understand...

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S: Yes, yes. He may think of himself as a religious teacher, even a spiritual teacher. He may not be, he may not realize, in a way, that he's no better than a Charlatan - wrapped in delusion.

Lalitaratna: Bhante, can I ask you a question on delusion? A delusion, it's volitional, is it?

S: Well, the word is Moha. So it's not just delusion - it's more than that. It's 'infatuation, bewilderment, confusion'. It's not any sort of specific action or even volition. It's the whole state, the whole condition of the mind. You're not just ignorant but you're ignorant in a mixed up, confused sort of way. It's an active thing a busy ignorance. It doesn't really know what it's doing.

Dharmapriya: He's portrayed as really pretty base. I mean, one of the three sort of fuels is consuming him and yet he's telling of things as if he were a spiritual master.

S: Yes, right. (Pause) Chalmers translates it as 'the wastrel, greedy for a penny fee, tells fortunes in abysmal ignorance'. That's quite good. It's not very literal, but it does convey something of the sense of the verse.

Sometimes people are wrongly impressed by the sort of pseudo-confidence that the pseudo-spiritual teacher very often possesses. They think, 'Well, he's so confident, he must know, he must be right!' Someone once said, I think it was about Macauley, "I wish I was as sure of any one thing as Macauley seems to be about everything".

I've been really quite shocked and horrified in India at the ease with which the allegedly religious or allegedly spiritual teacher, holds forth on all sorts of topics. The Indian seems to have the tendency to believe that the spiritual person must be sort of omniscient. He must know everything about everything! You know what I'm referring to? So that if you ask him even for advice about your health, or medical treatment, well, yes! He can give the answers because he's a spiritual personality. He knows everything! So gurus unfortunately get into the habit, or are accustomed to being treated as omniscient. They start behaving as if they were omniscient and if anything goes wrong, well, they just attribute it to your lack of faith and the fact that you didn't follow their directions properly.

Indians generally have got tremendous self-confidence compared with many Europeans and sometimes it has no real basis at all and gurus are those who have got absolutely well, extraordinary self-confidence. [105] Very often no more firmly based than that of the ordinary person. It really is amazing. Any sort of tentativeness or any sort of qualification of one's statements, any sort of seeming uncertainty or unwillingness to dogmatize is usually interpreted as a lack of spiritual development. But you find this in the West. People want that sort of pseudo-certainty. They want to be told by somebody who knows! Very often the things they want to be told or told about can't really be communicated in that sort of way. (Pause)

They seem to want some sort of oracle. This is one of my interesting experiences when I went to the States. You've heard of Norman O Brown who.

Voice: "Life Against Death"

S: "Life Against Death", yes. I've read this book 'Life Against Death'. In fact it was highly recommended to me by no less a person than Kevin Brooks! It was quite an 'in' book in those days. So, soon after my arrival in Yale, I think the very next day, some friends told me that there was going to be a lecture by Norman O Brown over at Wesleyan University. So we went along. I was really quite astonished because Norman O Brown stood up and he read his lecture didn't read it very well. There were about 300 people present style of delivery was sort of oracular. He was sort of handing down these oracles! And it was part of a new book of his, a book not then published but which was published subsequently and it's really extraordinary, the style was cryptic and oracular and you got these 300 people sitting there. Everybody taking it all in - the oracle is speaking!! That was their attitude. They were just taking it in.

Just swallowing it wholesale. This really stuck me as amazing! In a place like America, in a place like Wesleyan University. As though the entire abdication of any critical faculty ... they were just prepared to swallow whatever the oracle said. This was a comparatively modest and cultured oracle, not to speak of other oracles less well-informed, less thoughtful, less cultured. It was as though they'd made him the oracle. It wasn't so much that he was making himself the oracle, though his style did lend itself to that sort of treatment.

Keith: I think, generally in groups, just in making decisions hopefully not in the Friends, in the Coops, but generally the case that often the person with the most confidence wins the decision.

S: Yes, yes. Very often it is the seemingly confident - maybe he is genuinely confident - but it's the confident person who commands attention and who people will follow, for better or for worse. [106] A more far-sighted person may have doubts and scruples but very often people won't want to listen to them. They'll be swept off their feet by the more confident person, even perhaps led into disaster by the glib talker - the man who seems to know what he's talking about or the man even with a bigger charisma. People won't listen to the humdrum or fuddy-duddy who says: "well, what about this? What about that? How are we going to do that and supposing such and such happens?" All that's just swept aside as negative criticism. "We don't want negativity here you know!" (Laughter)

Darren: A certain amount of confidence can be quite helpful though.

S: Sometimes, yes. Very often confidence, - if it's reasonably genuine - will enable you to cut corners. Sometimes the confidence will carry you through the difficulties and maybe somebody else, seeing those difficulties, may not have the confidence to carry him through those difficulties.. You may have the confidence and you may not see the difficulties but if the confidence is reasonably well based and the difficulties aren't too great, your confidence will, among other things, carry you through.

Vajrananda: I think if you are confident it's very important to balance it with actually listening to people.

S: Yes. Especially those who disagree with you. To try to get a different point of view. I mean confidence is a very positive quality but obviously confidence which is properly based. If it isn't soundly based, it isn't really confidence at all.

Bernie: It does give you a go at something, if you do have a go at something, you need a certain amount of confidence just to have a go at it.

S: But you need to distinguish between other people's and your own genuine confidence based upon some, at least some solid experience and knowledge and a pseudo-confidence which is really no better than wishful thinking or blind ambition

Dharmapriya: Can one draw an opposite conclusion - a corollary to your point - if someone is confident, then they should really listen to people especially of opposite points of view? Can one draw an opposing conclusion, that if you are quite thoughtful and think about quite a few things or difficulties, that you should, as it were, maybe artificially boost your confidence and maybe stick to your guns a bit more when people start questioning you, because you have all these [107] doubts, weighing things. It maybe saps your confidence. Should you artificially maybe stick to your guns?

S: Well, at least you should be open to those that have more confidence than you have yourself. Otherwise your very doubts maybe self-fulfilling. Anyway, that's clear enough, isn't it? Let's carry on:

v.132 "And who exalts himself,
Despising other folk,
Smug in his self-conceit
Know him as outcast vile."

S: This is getting a bit 'near to the bone' as we say, because it was this that the Brahmin Baradvaja himself was doing. He was exalting himself, he was thinking very highly of himself. He was despising others. He was despising these shaven-headed people, who walked about in yellow robes, wandering from place to place.

Let's look at the Pali text: 'It's he who praises himself and despises other people' and there's a rather odd sort of phrase here: It's 'nihino sena manena' - which is not very easy to make out. It would seem to be: 'He who is himself a debased or degraded person because he has sort of settled down in conceit'. Literally here, 'he has lain down in conceit or sleeps in conceit'. Hence the translation as 'smug in his self-conceit'. His conceit is something he's settled down in. He's lain down in it as though on a bed.

Voice: Snug in himself.

S: Snug, yes, snug in his self-conceit. Snug and smug. You do meet people sometimes who are very self-satisfied, very complacent. They're conceited by they've a certain complacency, at the same time. They almost, sort of - what shall I say - indulge their feeling of conceit. They really enjoy that sort of feeling.

Lalitaratna: I've seen somebody lose an argument and in losing the argument, just suddenly became superior to everybody in the room and said "well, these fools!" They were incapable of winning so they discarded everybody: "I won't waste my time!"

S: Yes. It's quite impossible for them to accept that they've lost the argument.

[108]

Lalitaratna: Yes, so they must rose above them all.

S: And forgive them for being so stupid and ignorant! Yes, that's exactly what happens. This Brahmin was so convinced of his superiority with regard to the Sramana or the...

(End of Side One)

S: ...qualities of (renown) , not to speak of it occurring to him that the Buddha might be superior to him. Anyway, let's go on: 133, would someone like to read that?

v.133 "The mean and quarrelsome,
Sham, envious, malign, shameless,
Not fearing blame."

S: Yes. So he's an outcaste too. Here is a whole string of adjectives. Actually the order has been slightly reversed - first of all the outcaste in this verse is a wrathful person. He's mean - that is to say he's stingy. He is of evil desires. Sly, the translation says here and then - hiri and ottappa. These are two very important terms that I've gone into, in quite considerable length in relation to the positive mental events. Hiri and ottappa. These are traditionally called the guardians of the world. That is in a way the guardians of the world in the sense of guardians of the social order. Hiri - it's blame and shame, or shame and ottappa. Hiri is more like blame rather. Hiri is the feeling that you have when it is pointed out to you by others that you've done something wrong and you at once recognize that in fact, yes, you have done something wrong. You feel ashamed and this is regarded as a very positive mental state in Buddhism, that you should have this feeling when someone points out something unskilful that you've done, you at once feel shame. Not shame in the sense of feeling guilty by you're conscious...

Lalitaratna: Your own sense of integrity.

S: Yes, you realize, you see that you've not been true to yourself. So: this is hiri. And ottappa is when without anyone telling you, you realize of yourself, that you know, "that is wrong, I shouldn't have done that". It corresponds somewhat to what we often call conscience.

The word itself means a sort of burning. Your mind burns within you. You realize, "No, that was wrong. I shouldn't have done that. It was very bad. It was very unfortunate that I did that. I really am to blame. I shouldn't have done it." That sort of feeling is [109] ottappa. So hiri and ottappa. You could say shame and blame. Blame in the sense of self-blame. So these two are regarded as the guardians of the world. The guardians of the moral order and they're very very important. So we don't have time to discuss them today, but I can refer you to a discussion we had in the seminar on 'Mind in Buddhist Psychology', when we dealt with the positive mental events, among which are hiri and ottappa. So you should refer to the transcript of that. But for there to be the possibility of hiri, you must be in contact with good spiritual friends; with some sense, some appreciation of what is skilful and what is unskilful. And who care for you, who care enough for you to point out anything unskilful that you may do; draw it to your attention: that's unskilful, you shouldn't be doing it. And you for your part should be sufficiently convinced of their genuine friendship, their genuine goodwill to be able to accept that.

The Buddha does say in the 'Dhammapada' that it's a bit like the way in which the thoroughbred race horse responds to the whip. Just a little tickle of the whip and he responds. Just a touch of the whip and he responds. In the same way, your spiritual friends have only got just to indicate: "Look that wasn't quite skilful." At once you feel it: "Ah, yes, it wasn't". You respond at once. You're that sensitive, because you can't always see things yourself. You may sometimes, however sincere you are, need someone to point things out to you. It's extraordinary what you can not see yourself. You may really be thinking that what you're doing is quite all right, is quite skilful but then a spiritual friend points out that, no, it isn't!

And when it's pointed out then you can see it. Perhaps they'll explain why or go into it a little more deeply with you. Then you can see the true nature of what you've been doing or what you've been thinking or what you've been saying. So hiri is regarded as a very positive quality. Definitely a virtue.

Bernie: It's very interesting that the tip of the whip, just flick. Quite often it can seem like someone getting really angry and really tearing a strip off you. This is the feeling you quite often get in some communities that this person needs a strip torn off them, a real hammering. Where there's good contact and communication, and pointing out.

S: And also of course, if the person is sensitive to begin with and not just thick (Laughter) If he's too thick skinned it needs to be a good ripping. (Voices: Yes)

[110]

Bernie: Keeping pounding them ...you did say thoroughbred ...quality horse

S: Anyway, let's not linger over that, We have to press forward a bit.

v.134 "He who reviles the Wake,
His listener, or those
Gone forth, or householders:
Know him a to be an outcast vile

S: So anybody who speaks against the Enlightened One or his disciples. That is to say, literally here - his listeners, here it's his disciples or against those who have gone forth from home into the homeless life or even against ordinary householders. Know him as the outcast man.

Bernie: We're getting close to home now. (Laughter)

S: Yes, very close. Again, even by speaking against other people, especially against those who are spiritually developed, there's a terrible breach committed.

Bernie: Your respect and your sort of reverence to those who are more developed, sort of denying...

S: Well you notice it even says, not just that the outcast is one who speaks against the Buddha, speaks against his disciples, speaks against those who have gone forth, but even against householders. Who speaks against those who are on the same level as himself - that also is disruptive, that also is a breach of community, let's say. So even we should be careful

of speaking against.

Keith: What exactly does revile mean?

S: To revile means to abuse, to attribute evil to. But the actual text says, 'paribhasati' which is literally speaking against.

Vajrananda: In the sense of disagreeing with.

S: No. Actually criticizing or engaging in negative or destructive criticism. Reviling is probably quite a good equivalent of paribhasati. Chalmers has 'defame' which is much stronger.

Lalitaratna: Slander.

S: Slander. It's a bit like slander. It's not just criticizing the Buddha, in a relatively harmless sort of way, it means speaking [111] against him in the sense of well, denying that he is the Buddha, denying that he is in fact Enlightened. (Pause)

Those who said, " Yes, it's now come quite near home" because Bharadvaja the Brahman was reviling the Buddha, speaking against the Buddha, calling him 'mundaka' and all the rest of it. So the Buddha is gradually convincing him or gradually making clear to him that he himself is the outcast. He himself is the vasala, not the Buddha.

Darren: The approach so far has been one that is quite negative. It's not positive at all. It's really pointing out the negative all the way through.

S: Even though a positive is always implied.

Darren: Well, surely we have to imply that. I mean it's not really implied, is it, in the verses themselves?

S: Well, in a way it is. Because if you make it clear that a 'vasala' is such and such, then you make it clear also that the ideal is to be the opposite of that. In that sense at least, the implication is there... Anyway, let's press on. We could spend more time on that verse but perhaps it isn't strictly necessary. Let's go on.

v.135 "Who is no man-of-worth
And maketh claim to be,
Thief of all worlds is he,
Lowest of outcasts he!
Such are all outcasts called,
This I declare to thee."

S: So yes. The Pali is even more emphatic: "Yo ve anaraha santo araham patijanati coro sabrahmake loke, esa kho vasaladhamo. Ete kho vasala vutta, maya vo ye pakasita". It's very very strong indeed.

So again, the Buddha is certainly getting at this Brahmin. He who is unworthy but claims to

be worthy. You notice the term is 'araham'. The original meaning of just worthy. It eventually came to be applied to the disciple who had realized Enlightenment. The Arhant. But here it just means worthy.

So he who, claiming to be worthy is not really worthy and this is what the Brahmin really is doing. He is not only the greatest outcast, the lowest outcast he is, 'coro sabrahmake loke' - he's a thief in the world together with Brahma. That is to say, in that world which consists of the world itself together with the Brahmaloaka. In other words, the whole universe, material and spiritual - in that world [112] in that universe, he is just a big thief. It's a sort of Indian idiom. He is no better than a thief. He steals from the world.

If you profess to be, if you make yourself out to be better than you are, worthy when you are not worthy, it's as though you were stealing from the world, stealing from people. You are taking something that does not belong to you. That is to say, good reputation and so on. You are no better than a thief. Or you exist in the world as a thief. Do you see the point? 'And all outcasts are of this nature. This is what I tell you. - "Ete kho vasala vutta" - All those who are called vasala are like this - "Maya vo ye pakasita " By me and then vo is the emphatic part of the particle - 'ye' - to you 'pakasita' - make clear. Literally it means 'publish', 'make brilliant, illumine.

Darren: It's illuminated.

S: Yes, yes. This translates it as 'declare', but it's much more than that. Prakasha. You know our friend Prakasha (Laughter) is 'radiance', so 'pakasati' is a verb - to make radiant, to light up. So this I light up for you, or this for you I light up. This matter I throw light on it for you. It's much stronger and more vivid than just 'declare'. So to you, for your benefit, I've made it clear... what an outcast is so that you can recognize it yourself in the description and not call other people, not call even the Buddha outcast any longer. In other words, the Buddha has brought Bharadvaja finally to realize his true position. He's made him see himself as the Buddha R h; m (Pause)

Bernie: It's quite a strip he's torn off him, not a mere touch of the whip! (Laughter)

S: All right on to the next verse, which sort of sums up the matter:

v.136 "No outcast is by birth,
No Brahman is by birth:
By deeds an outcast he,
By deeds a Brahman he!

S: Here the Buddha attacks the Brahmin's fundamental assumption that one is not an outcast by birth, one is not a Brahmin by birth. The Brahmin thought that he was a Brahmin simply because he was born as a Brahmin. One is an outcast by deeds, one is a Brahmin by deeds. [113] If you don't behave like a Brahmin, you're not a Brahmin. If you behave like an outcast, you are an outcast.

So this is a verse which is very often quoted, especially in connection with any discussion of the Buddha's attitude towards the caste system. (Pause)

So one should never judge a person, never devalue a person simply in accordance with the position he occupies in society according to his birth. That's a question of social position not of individual worth.

The Brahmins really did think that they were not just Brahmins - that they were the good people, the virtuous people, the religious people even the holy people, just because they'd been born into a particular family and in the same way someone who is born into another kind of family was by birth outcast or even right down to the present day, Untouchable.

We can't realize what it's like being born in that sort of situation but perhaps on contact with our ex-Untouchable Buddhist friends in India, one will soon realize, one will soon come to know, what it is like, what it was like for many of them or is still like for many of them to some extent, in as much as they are still regarded as Untouchable by large sections of Hindu society. Just because they were born in a particular family, they are inherently low. Inherently despicable regardless of their behaviour. So that is the Brahmanical point of view, the Brahmanical outlook - that people are high or low according to their birth, whereas the Buddhist view is that people are high or low according to their worth, and their worth is discerned by their action not by their birth. This is the point the Buddha is making here. A very, very important point at that time and still in India a very very important point and still very much needing to be made. There is a lot more I could say on this subject.

Dharmavira: It's very concise, isn't it? that verse. It hits straight home.

S: Anyway, there's a lot more I could say on this subject, but I've said it all elsewhere on other occasions. There's no need to repeat and then the Buddha just gives an example. Perhaps I'd better just read this myself. We really must conclude now.

v.137 "Then know it too by this,
As my example shows:
Matanga was 'tis known
Dog-eating low-caste man. [114]
"Yet yondermost fame, so hard
To win, Matanga won;
And to him came to serve
Noble and Brahman hosts.
Mounting the deva-car
He rode the dustless path,
And from lust's passions loosed
Came to the world of Brahm!
Birth was no bar for him
To rise to world of Brahm!
Yet there are Brahmans born,
In Veda-mantras versed,
Who oft-times may be seen
Amid their evil deeds:
Theirs is disgrace here now,
Gone hence the Ill-bourn theirs;
By birth they're not debarred
From ill-bourn or disgrace!

No outcast is by birth
No Brahman is by birth:
By deeds an outcast he,
By deeds a Brahman he!"

S: So he gives the example of this sort of legendary character, Matanga, who even though he was born into a very low family, an Untouchable family, perhaps a family of dog-eaters - he followed the spiritual path; he gained the Brahmaloaka. He gained, one might say, Enlightenment, despite his lowly birth. Whereas Brahmins who have studied the Vedas, were incapable of those sort of attainments.

And he goes on to say, well, even if you are born as an outcast, if you follow the spiritual path, you will gain the spiritual goal. And even if you are born in a Brahmin family, if you lead an evil life, the fact that you were born in a Brahmin family, will not save you from an unhappy rebirth.

"And when he had thus spoken Brahman Bharadvaja, the fire-worshipper, said to the Master: 'It's amazing, Master Gotama; it's wonderful Master Gotama. Just as a man might set up something overturned ... even so Master Gotama has declared Dharma in many ways. Lo!' - those dots mean that there's a series omitted because they've been given before - "I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to Dharma, to the order of the monks. Accept me as a lay-disciple, Master Gotama, gone to [115] the refuge from this day forth to life's end!"

So there was a complete change in the Brahmin's attitude as a result of this encounter, and it really does seem to have been an encounter with the Buddha. His views are completely reversed, turned upside down. He realizes that one can't attach so much importance to birth as he'd formerly believed. He learns through the real (hard encounter?) he sees that he himself was the outcast, but by seeing that clearly, and seeing it sincerely and accepting that, he does bring about total change, total transformation within himself, to such an extent, that he is able to go for refuge. The situation is completely reversed.

The Buddha from being in his eyes, just a Vasala, an outcast, becomes his teacher, his object of refuge. His attitude towards him has completely altered, so the Buddha's work is done... as somebody else goes for refuge, somebody else enters upon the path; maybe somebody else enters the stream. So the Buddha goes back to his Vihara and quietly has his meal.

So it's certainly a little text that we did ... It's a pity we had to hurry a little over those last verses. There's quite a bit we could have said, but anyway, I think we have quite adequately covered the main points that arise in connection with this Sutta.

(End of Tape 4 - end of Seminar)

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