

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

THE PRECEPTS OF THE GURUS - SECOND SEMINAR

[Study based on the Chapter entitled:
'The Supreme Path, The Rosary of Precious Gems'
found in

"A BUDDHIST BIBLE", edited by Dwight Goddard,
1970 edition, Beacon Press, Boston, USA.
(ISBN 0-8070-5951-X)]

Held at: Padmaloka

Date: August 1979

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Nagabodhi, Mangala, Devaraja, Manjuvajra, Padmaraja, Kamalasila, Dhammamati, Colin (from Glasgow), Derek Goodman (now Sasanaratna), Owen French (from Norwich), Campbell McEwan (now Jinavamsa).

S: All right then, so we're going to be studying the text called *the Supreme Path of Discipleship, the Precepts of the Gurus*: we're going to be starting from Section Two, because Section One, "*The Ten Causes of Regret*" was done, I believe it was by the chairmen in the course of a whole weekend; they spent a whole weekend over those ten causes of regret. We're going to start from "*The Ten Requirements*", and we're just going to spend as much time on them as we need. We're in no hurry to finish the text because, almost certainly, some part of it will be left, and we'll be carrying on with it at the next study retreat in three weeks time. So, can we read the Ten Requirements one by one: that is to say, going round in a circle, read one and then discuss it thoroughly, as much as need be.

II. The Ten Requirements

(1). Having estimated one's capabilities, one requireth a sure line of action".

S: There's quite a lot contained here, actually; you could probably spend the whole of the rest of the day discussing this particular precept; the first point that occurs is that you can't really decide upon the sure line of action unless you have properly estimated your own capabilities. Knowing, as it were, what you are capable of doing, and knowing what line of action you should take, are two very closely related things. Perhaps I could start the ball rolling by one or two remarks of a general

nature; for instance I've noticed, in the context of the Friends, that after someone is ordained, they take up various things; they get involved with various things, quite often of an active, even organisational nature, but the thing that they first get involved with is not necessarily the best thing for them, or the right line of action for them, and quite often, people make a false start, I've noticed: and this is usually because they've wrongly estimated their own capabilities, not just capabilities in a narrow sort of technical sense, but their own nature; they've wrongly understood their own nature; they haven't really understood what their strong points or weak points are, and so they've sometimes got into something which was not the best thing for them to get into, even if not actually the worst. So it isn't so easy to estimate one's own capabilities; it isn't so easy to understand oneself, and then to take up the sure line of action that you require; these are two quite difficult things to do. You may be, in principle, a very committed person; you may be very concerned with the whole process of your personal development and higher evolution, but that does not necessarily mean that you'll find it very easy to decide upon exactly the right line of concrete action that you need to follow; you may make several almost false starts before you really hit upon that line of action which is right for you in the fullest possible sense. That is not to say you won't do quite a number of things well, successfully. They may not be false starts in the sense of objective failure; you may do those things perfectly well to everybody's satisfaction but they may not necessarily therefore constitute the sure line of action which you require in your own best interests in the fullest and deepest sense. To discover that, to hit upon that, even if you are a committed individual, is not easy to do. So perhaps we could talk around this for a bit, and explore this a bit; it's a very important issue. If it confronts the committed person, how much more in a sense does it affect the not-committed, or not-quite-so-committed person? In fact, for the non-committed person, you could say a sure line of action in the real sense, well, that question just doesn't arise.

Mangala: Perhaps it's almost inevitable then that....people maybe come around the centre and start getting into things. So they want to do something so they see the place needs somebody to buy the vegetables or do certain things so they say "Right, I'll do that".

S: Well, that's on a sort of ad hoc basis. I mean you don't sort of ever think you're going to go on buying vegetables for the rest of your life, even though it is for the FWBO.

Mangala: It could also be something a bit more, let's say, important, say, I could be treasurer or secretary; that's really what I meant.

S: The fact that it is a sort of job that needs doing at present, and that you're quite able and quite happy to do it, and do it successfully for a while, doesn't necessarily mean that it is the sure line of action which you require because it's as though two things have got to, in a way, perfectly coincide, or as perfectly as possible: your, so to speak, subjective requirements and the objective needs of the actual situation; it may not be always easy to fit those two together.

Mangala: Would you say that it's inevitable that you must make some false start.

S: I don't say that it's inevitable; it may not always happen, but I think it does happen quite a lot.

Nagabodhi: But when you talk about making false starts, doing things to which you're maybe not suited, I think something that has often been at the back of my mind is that I ought to be prepared or capable of doing anything. So where, for example, do talents, personality traits come in to this?

S: Yes. Well, there's also the question of one's own capabilities. There is the fact that we are able to do certain things as it were, naturally, better than others. Other factors being equal it

would seem a pity if those talents were not put at the service of the Movement. Again, there are talents and talents. You might be able to do something, having been trained to do it which is not really in your best interests to do, even though you can do it efficiently and even though it is a useful thing from the point of view of the Movement. So therefore, you sometimes have to dig very deeply into yourself; it's more a question of getting in touch with natural aptitudes which have got almost a necessary connection with the sort of person you are, rather than a question of superficial skills and talents, or relatively superficial skills and talents which you've acquired, or which represent, simply, things that you can do, but which don't have any real connection with yourself as an individual, or with the process of your individual development.

So you can see how closely related these two things are: estimating one's own capabilities, and deciding upon the sure line of action which you require.

Derek: If you find yourself in that kind of situation where you're doing something, and you are able to do it quite efficiently, and it is useful for the Movement, but at the same time you're quite sure it's not best suited to your own needs and capabilities, should you just stick with it for a while?

S: Sometimes it's very difficult to decide because one has as it were to weigh one thing against another; for instance, if you're doing a particular thing that, let's say for the sake of argument, isn't particularly good that you should do, well, how much harm, as it were, does the doing of that thing do you and how much good as it were, does it do the Movement? Sometimes you may have to balance a little or even quite a bit of say inconvenience for yourself against quite a bit of convenience for the Movement. But then, on the other hand, if what you are doing is having a long-term bad effect on you, even though it may be very useful for the Movement, it's certainly not something you should go on doing indefinitely because your connection with the Movement is basically, or essentially based on the fact of your own need to develop, your own desire to develop.

On the other hand, there's another factor to be considered; we mustn't be too precious about what we like to do; it isn't a question of liking this or not liking that but of what is really necessary for us in the course of our development which may sometimes involve doing something which we don't particularly like doing, or even something that we're not particularly good at. Sometimes, that is the thing that we need to do for the sake of our own development. On the other hand, we don't want people who are responsible for getting things done over-using this argument! Do you see what I mean? It requires a very fine balance, a very, sort of, developed awareness of the person involved, the situation, and quite a deep understanding of things, a quite fair, objective attitude. Otherwise on the one hand, someone will use the argument; "Oh, it isn't in accordance with my development", as a means of getting out of doing something he doesn't like doing; on the other hand, the person who's responsible for getting the job done, will use the argument, "Ah well, if you don't like doing it, well, probably it's a very good thing that you should do it". You can use that as an argument for getting the job done because that is what he is more concerned about. So you have both the person doing it, and the person getting done have to try to do justice to both sides of the situation.

Manjuvajra: How would you set about finding out which were the thing that you needed to do?

S: I think you can't really decide in the abstract. I think you can only get some light on the matter by actually doing something, and then discovering in actual experience what sort of effect it has on you. I don't think you can sit down and sort of think it out, though obviously, you'll give some prior consideration before taking something up, but you don't really know

very well. I mean, sometimes people take up things that they think they are not at all suited for; they hadn't really thought of taking up that particular thing but circumstances have pushed them into it; and then they find that they like doing it, it's doing them good, etc, etc. So I think, with due caution, or maybe, in accordance with the advice of spiritual friends, you actually take up something, and then see where it is leading you, what sort of effect it has on you. I don't think you can always know in advance. I think you should be prepared to take up something that does represent quite unfamiliar territory, sometimes. But I think in a way more basic is one's understanding of oneself. I think, more often than not, we've got completely wrong ideas about ourselves, our nature, temperament, what we're suited for, what we're good at, etc. We're not at all the sort of people that we think we are, more often than not. I said to someone yesterday evening that one of the things that happens, sort of, if you keep an eye on yourself as you enter, well, not exactly middle age, but as you enter upon the years of maturity, let's say, that very often you realise that what you have been thinking of as your virtues were, in fact, your vices, or at least your weaknesses; and you have to sort of revise the way in which you look at yourself.

Devaraja: Can you say any more about what you mean by virtues?

S: Well, yes; supposing somebody thought that they were very good-natured, very tolerant, very easy-going, very understanding, it could have been just that they were afraid to disagree with people; they didn't like to upset people; their security was vested in the fact that they got on well with people, and that people liked them; they didn't want, at any cost, to disturb that; that was a weakness, it wasn't a virtue. Do you see what I mean? It was almost a vice. But they thought of themselves as so nice, so kind, so tolerant; they were simply afraid of disagreement, afraid of the insecurity that disagreement would threaten them with.

Mangala: Do you think that perhaps, let's say one's spiritual friends would have a clearer idea of what you'd be good at, than you yourself?

S: Well, I think if your spiritual friend had known you, and known you well over a period of several years, very likely they would be able to give you some useful advice. But I don't think even your spiritual friends would have a sort of intuitive knowledge of what was good for you after only a relatively short, relatively superficial acquaintance, say, even of a year or so, however good their intentions, however much they liked you and wished you well. Now I've really noticed in the case of quite a few of our friends that it's taken them four, five, even six or more years to sort out, after ordination, what they were really good at, and good for, in the fullest sense, within the context of the Movement. So I think, in a way, one must be prepared for this: let's take it that you come into the FWBO in the normal sort of way, let's say when you're in your early twenties and you're ordained, say, within a couple of years: let's say, for the sake of argument, you're ordained by the time you're twenty five, though maybe that is a bit late on the whole, but anyway, let's say by the time you're twenty five, I think you won't really know what you're good at and what you could best do in the interests of your own development and the good of the Movement until you're about thirty, if not thirty one or two. I think it's partly getting to know yourself, partly undoing previous conditionings, partly exploring the opportunities quite objectively; opportunities may not exist at the particular time that you happened to begin being around, or at the centre that you're around - because we're still quite small and limited in many ways.

So I don't think that we should think in terms of, that we necessarily know, or know very well, or can find out very quickly what we're best at, or best for, or what our capabilities in the true sense really are. In the case of those who come into the Movement pretty late in life, say when they're over forty or over fifty, they might have to face the rather frightening fact that the greater part of their life has been a false start; they may be on the wrong track; they may have been pursuing some line in connection with, say, their lay or professional life that

was just really not very good or not very suitable for them, and have to make a completely fresh start after getting involved with the Friends, and thinking in terms of their individual spiritual development.

This is not just to say that what you're not suited for is necessarily going to be something that you're not very good at; you may be very good at it, and do it quite successfully but it still may not be the thing that you should really be doing, I mean in the wider interests of your own development; and I think it's very important, as the years go by, that people should more and more proximate to what they really want to do, and what is really good for them to be doing in objective terms, because only then will they be able to put themselves into it, heart and soul, so to speak, completely. Otherwise there'll be some need within themselves, as it were, unsatisfied. So therefore it's very important on the subjective side that people contact, assuming their commitment to start with, assuming their spiritual commitment, what, within that frame of commitment, they really want to do, and they just have to do that, and be allowed to do that and encouraged to do that, whether it's meditating, administering, painting, taking classes, raising funds, they must in the deepest and best sense, do what they want to do. Well of course, it's not easy to find out what you want to do in that full, 100% sense. It's the most difficult thing in the world in a way to do what you want to do, or to know what you want to do. What you want to do is not just some passing fancy or whim; it's something much deeper than that, something really deeply in accordance with you nature.

Mangala: Would you say it's something that you actually need as for you to develop it, then?

S: I think you need to do what you want to do.

Mangala: But I mean, what you want to do, does that have to be something quite clearly defined, and specific, almost?

S: I think it does.

Mangala: I was going to say you could, in a sense, not do anything in particular, if that's possible.

S: I think you could, but that would be a very definite thing; in some ways that's the most difficult of all, that you are just around and you're just as it were living your life without any particular work, responsibility, duty, function, but I think very few people could do that, or would do that or would want to do that. I think most people want, and need, to be occupied, so to speak, have a definite job to do, of one kind or another.

Mangala: What about the possibility of somebody, I think you said this, perhaps before, a bit like maybe somebody, like say they'd be a treasurer for five years, and do really good and then they decide, well, I'm fed up with that now, now I want to go and write books or something. I mean, do you think that one can renew what one really wants to do, every so often?

S: I Think it can change; I mean, what you really want to do, what you would really like to do is to have a full, rounded experience of life, of the Movement and not being able to do everything at the same time, so to speak, you'd like to go from one thing to another in a systematic way, adding to your experience and insight.

Mangala: But for the time being, that's what you really want to do? One particular thing?

S: Right, yes because you can't do a number of things at the same time literally, can you?

Kamalasila: Do you think everybody has got one particular thing that they really want to do?

S: Well, I would say this: it's not necessarily one specific thing; you may not necessarily, say, want to paint thangkas every day of your life, all throughout your life. There may, in a sense, be a number of things but they'll be connected by a sort of inner thread so that what appear to be a number of different things are really different aspects of one and the same thing, one and the same interest, one and the same commitment.

Kamalasila: Do you think everybody has got this sort of inner thread?

S: I mentioned earlier on, within the framework of your individual commitment. If you haven't got that individual commitment, that commitment to your own development as an individual, well all that can hold you together is some worldly interest or (**Kamalasila:** Yes there must be some integration), yes, something of that sort.

Manjuvajra: It's a bit like, I mean, your commitment is the content and then what you do is like the form of the expression of your commitment.

S: You could say that, yes.

Manjuvajra: Then you're saying that that expression can change?

S: Well, yes.

Manjuvajra: Supposing one of the things you're interested in was writing, I mean should one be thinking in terms of like developing that particular way of functioning so that eventually, over the years, you would develop your skills and so on, so that eventually that becomes your sole method of functioning?

S: I don't think you necessarily have to think like that. One of the things I've noticed is, there are two kinds of people, in a way, and also even two kinds of a spiritual ideal. One is the intense person, if you like, the deep and intense person, and there is the broad person who is not necessarily the superficial person any more than the intense person is necessarily the narrow person; you get that even in the field of say literature; you can get say the poet who is nothing but a poet, who has got no interest except in poetry all through his career; but you've also got the man who writes poetry, plays, novels, takes part in political activities, gives speeches etc, etc. He might have all sorts of other interests too. It's as though this is a temperamental thing, so maybe this is one of the things that you have to decide about yourself, whether you are one of these hermit-like people who concentrate absolutely on one quite narrow field, very intensely, or whether you're one of these people who have lots of interests all interrelated, but turning now to this and now to that, a bit like William Morris who'd work for a couple of hours writing an epic poem and he'd get a bit tired of that, and he'd do a bit of type-setting and design a few borders for his books and then he'd get tired of that and design a few curtains and then he'd write two or three lyric poems and then he'd paint a picture, and he'd spend the whole day like this, very happily every day; this is how his life was.

But someone else would be brooding over his poems, day after day after day, and never even think of anything else. Look at Balzac writing his novels, shutting himself up in his garret, almost literally, and putting on a monastic dress with a cowl; he regarded himself as the monk, as it were, of novel writing; he was completely dedicated to this, just like a monk would be to his cell and his meditations; he'd just spend the greater part of the twenty four hours with strong brews of coffee, and just writing his novels. He wrote - I forget what the

number was - it must have been about two hundred in the end.

You see these two different types? And then again, I mention two different kinds of spiritual ideal in this respect; this is something I've noticed in the past; I noticed this in India: you can have the purest spiritual ideal, that is to say, your interest is nothing except meditation, asceticism, the strict life; every turn, you ask yourself, well, what effect does this have on my spiritual development, even on my meditation? Does it help it or not? If it doesn't help it, all right, give it up; you really strip things down. Milarepa's a very good example of this kind of thing. On the other hand you've got the spiritual person or the spiritual ideal which is an ideal of many-sidedness, that you should be able to teach and give talks, you should be able to write, you should be able to meditate, you should be able to perform feats of magic; it's the many-sided spiritual ideal. You see the two kinds?

So again, one has to decide whether one is more of this type or more inclined towards that type. Again it's the intense person and the broad person. I don't know what this works out as in terms of Buddhism and the character types, but this is what I've noticed myself.

Devaraja: Can you give an example of the second?

S: Well, Padmasambhava; Milarepa and Padmasambhava are very good examples within the Tibetan tradition; so in the Japanese tradition, Kobodashi seems a pretty good example of the second, who again, significantly was a Tantric teacher, the founder of the Shingon School in Japan, "Kukai", he's also called.

Nagabodhi: Obviously, the implication is that whichever ideal you subscribe to, whichever kind of person you are, you are sufficiently integrated and concentrated as a person not for the broadness to just be a scatteredness.

S: Right, yes; nor for the concentratedness and intensity to be a narrowness or an impoverishment.

Mangala: I feel perhaps, a danger in, even maybe in a way thinking like this, is that I go away or people could get hold of this kind of material, and then try to sort of think it all out, go around thinking; I mean (words unclear) what I've been doing and -

S: Well, you know you should give some thought to it but as I've said, you can only really discover in terms of action and experience; you should actually do something, and then maybe consider, after a year or two, what effect it's had on you, and where it's got you, and what effect it probably would have if you continued in it.

Kamalasila: Would there be any thing wrong in thinking about what you'd experienced?

S: Well, you should reflect, in advance, what would be the likely effect upon you but you can't really know unless you get into it; unless you have a certain amount of self-knowledge to begin with, and yes, you definitely know that this would not be good, or that would be good, to some extent. I mean that sort of knowledge from experience presumably should accumulate as you go on.

Kamalasila: I find the personalities of both Milarepa and Padmasambhava appeal equally, so does that mean I'm quite confused?

S: No, it just means you're very, very many-sided. That is also something that does happen; one is attracted by contradictory ideals, or one wants to do contradictory things. For instance, this is not an unusual thing, I would say that, for instance, you feel like being sociable and

also feel like being solitary at the same time, and both appeal equally to you, and that does make life a bit difficult. You can only alternate them, because obviously you can't do both at the same time except on a very high, transcendental level. (Pause)

But one of the things that I regard as quite important - I've mentioned it already, or touched upon it already, but I touch upon it again - which is that after various trials, experiments, maybe failures and false starts, you should end up - I'm assuming that you're a sincerely committed person to begin with - doing what you want to do. I see more and more that there's no point in your doing something if you don't want to do it. I'm not referring to your being whimsical, or anything like that; it's a much more sort of serious matter than that. If you're not doing it because you want to do it - though again one must be a little careful here because sometimes you may genuinely want to help out, even though it means, in a sense, doing something that you don't quite like doing - but with that proviso or with that qualification, what you are doing eventually, what you really get into doing, should be what you want to do; and I don't think there's really much value, from a spiritual point of view, in your doing something unless you really want to do that thing. You must be in contact with your real, positive feelings in doing it. Otherwise you'd have to question your motive for doing it. Why were you doing it if you didn't want to do it?

If circumstances absolutely force you, all right, recognise that: "I'm not doing it because I want to. Circumstances have so come about that I'm obliged to do it, all right I do it because I'm compelled to by circumstances". But don't kid yourself that you want to do it, or that you like doing it, even. Just say well, I'm only doing it because of circumstances and I'm going to get out of it as soon as I can.

Some people don't always realise that what they're doing is not what they want to do. In fact they don't want to do what they're doing; they've just got into the habit of doing it, but they don't do it with any real zest or enthusiasm or enjoyment. So I mean for short periods, you may have to do what you don't like to do; but you should be very careful about going on too long in that particular way. I am speaking now within the spiritual framework, the framework of individual development. It's not a question of just indulging your subjective desires - again I emphasise, I'm speaking of the committed person - but you must be in touch in what you are doing, with your own feelings and emotions, and be doing what you want to do in the deepest sense so that you feel a deep sense of fulfilment in doing what you are doing, which may involve really going through difficulties and hard times and suffering, but still you are happy because it's what you really want to do, none the less. So this really sort of excludes doing anything out of a sense of false obligation, false responsibility, guilt, etc, etc. [Pause]

And, under modern conditions, it's very easy to get out of contact with one's own feelings, and out of contact with what you really want to do. The least that you can do is if you're doing something that you don't want to do, at least acknowledge that you don't want to do it, and are not doing it because you want to.

Mangala: So that it's just really maybe worth stopping to ask yourself why you're actually doing what you are doing?

S: Yes, especially if you're not particularly enjoying it. It may be that you're just accepting within a larger, wider framework of doing what you want to do, some temporary obstacle or difficulty, some aspect of the total situation that you're not happy with, even though you're happy with the total situation itself. I mean, sometimes that situation comes about.

Manjuvajra: There it's important to keep the wide perspective.

S: Yes, and be actually in contact with it. You shouldn't get too far away from it, in terms of feeling. For instance, you may very much enjoy writing but you don't enjoy typing out what you've written. Well, you just have to accept that, unless you can get someone to do it for you. But supposing you were always typing out somebody else's stuff, after a while you'd get thoroughly fed up with that, unless you were actually really happy to be helping them in that way, and really wanting to help them produce their stuff.

Manjuvajra: That's also a really valid thing to want to do, isn't it, to help another person.

S: Oh yes, indeed. If it wasn't, there wouldn't be any bodhisattva ideal, in the ordinary statement of that ideal, that is. So I think one should be a little suspicious of people who seem to be involved in the spiritual life, and doing this and doing that, but don't seem to be enjoying very much of it, or maybe not any or it, and sort of grumble and complain sometimes: they don't want to meditate and they don't want to study and they don't want to communicate, etc, etc. Well, what are they into it for?

If, in the long run and on the whole, you don't enjoy it, well, you're not really into it. There will be incidental difficulties, incidental painful experiences, but on the whole, you should be enjoying it, or in the long run, enjoying it. You should be really glad you're into it, otherwise there's not really much point in it.

Manjuvajra: Would you ever advise anyone who doesn't seem to be enjoying their spiritual life on a fairly deepish level, would you advise them to leave it? I mean, supposing someone has been around for five or six years, they'd been trying to get into it but didn't really, they never really seemed to get into it, would you ever advise them to maybe get themselves a job outside and get involved in the world?

S: I don't think one can necessarily separate the world and the spiritual life quite so sharply as that question suggests, or would seem to suggest. I would certainly hesitate very, very much before saying to anybody, well, don't bother about the spiritual life, you're not really suited for it. Go back to the worldly life. You know, feeling that someone wasn't making much progress, and suggesting, say he took up an outside job would not necessarily imply that you were telling him not to bother with the spiritual life any more because it might be, or it could be, that taking up, an as it were, worldly job, outside, so to speak, would say help him to get his energies moving, and would be the next step that he needed to take in the interests of ultimate spiritual development; the important thing would be that he could remain in contact to some extent. It's not always easy to tell what is the spiritual course and what is the worldly course. Sometimes people need to give up the ostensibly, as it were, spiritual activities, not necessarily because they're not cut out for spiritual life - maybe their approach is wrong; they need to change their approach, and perhaps they can change their approach best by getting involved, to some extent, for a while, within a very much broader spiritual context, with something which is labelled, as it were, "worldly", say, in the form of an outside job; that may be the best thing for them in the long run, in the interests of their spiritual development. At the same time, you're not in the position to guarantee that, you can only hope, you can only recommend that to the best of your knowledge, that would be a positive step for them to take, but please remain in contact. Everything depends upon that, in a way, in the long run. Do what you like but remain in contact.

But if someone takes an outside job, it doesn't mean that a chorus of lamentation should go out that they're lost to the spiritual life forever, that's ridiculous. Well, I don't think one can ever, in a way, write anybody off, so long as they keep in contact. I don't think I've ever told anyone, there's not much point in your bothering, you're not cut out for the spiritual life because it's always possible I think for somebody to develop, at least a little bit more, given,

perhaps, a change of circumstances, a different kind of opportunity, etc.

Manjuvajra: I was thinking of one occasion when Milarepa, I think it was, (Bhavador), one of his women disciples, he kept sending her away, telling her to get married and devote herself to her husband and not bother with the spiritual life, but she kept coming back.

S: Well, he could have been testing her. I would say that one could say that sort of thing only to a quite strong person, and perhaps if he felt that there was an element of attachment to him in her attitude. Also, don't forget, in Tibet in the old days it was difficult to get away from the Dharma, or, at least from its external manifestations. It's not quite the same situation as it is in society today. (Pause)

But to go back maybe to the broader issues, the sort of question that arises is, well, look. yes, all right, I'm committed, I've committed myself, I've committed myself to the Three Jewels, I've been ordained, but what am I going to do? You see what I mean? You've committed yourself, but all right what are you going to do? The commitment needs working out in very concrete terms; not only that, but you are a human being, an adult, male human being, let's say; you've got energies, you've got

[end of side one side two]

capabilities; you need to lead, to a great extent, an active life; you need to do things, to achieve things, that is the way you operate. So those are the terms in which you have to express your commitment. Your commitment has to take over that whole side of yourself and work itself out through that. (Pause)

So I think one of the things we should be careful about here, I'm getting on to a slightly different tack, and I don't want to generalise too much, but one of the things I think we should be careful about is, once we get involved with the FWBO or get ordained, is continuing to do the thing that we were doing before, simply because we're good at doing it and it's useful to the Movement. You see what I mean? It may be that the interests of that particular person's individual development require that he has quite a break from what he was doing before he got involved with the FWBO. Otherwise, I know the temptation is, sometimes, to, you need someone to do the accounts, and along comes some mitra, sort of sent by the gods, as it were, who's an accountant. So, all right, you approach him and you rope him in and you're really pleased you've got someone to do the accounts. But maybe he's been doing accounts for thirty years, it may not be the thing that is really best for him even though he's very good at it. So all right, let him do the accounts for a while to help out, but don't assume that because he's good at it, therefore it's necessarily good for him, especially when he's been doing it for a very long time.

And also, however old you are, don't be afraid of developing new interests. Remember Grandma Moses who took up painting at the age of 78 or something [Laughter], and became world-famous, with her primitive painting. She lived for about ten years after taking up painting, I think it was at the age of about 78. She had nothing else to do, you see, so she took up painting and was really good at it; she'd never done it before but anyway, she became quite famous and her canvasses now sell for quite large sums. So always remain open to that possibility: developing a talent that you never even thought you'd had before, just doing something that you've never done before, something quite different, something completely novel, completely new. Don't sort of typecast yourself all the time: "Oh, I'm an artist" or "I'm an accountant" or "I'm the organisational type" or "I'm not the organisational type". Always be open to fresh possibilities of expression.

Nagabodhi: How's the Bodhisattva Vow to master all the dharmas?

S: I don't think one should take that too literally; I don't think it necessarily means that you study all aspects of the Buddhist scriptures or teachings or traditions so that you have the Madhyamika and the Yogachara and the Abhidharma in all their detail at one's fingertips. I don't think it necessarily means that. You could say that it basically means just one thing: that the bodhicitta has arisen, you have an experience of the voidness, you manifest compassion, and you're able to function in accordance with the needs of the people that you meet. That is really what I think mastering all the Dharmas means. It means a complete flexibility in your approach. You need know only one thing but if you know that thing sufficiently deeply, and are sufficiently flexible in your approach, you can put it across to almost anybody. But you can meet scholars who are well-equipped and who know all the teachings of the different sorts but can't even put across the basic ideas about Buddhism to an ordinary intelligent person. So I don't think you should think of the bodhisattva as having a sort of encyclopedic knowledge of Buddhist doctrine. He is imbued with an actual experience of the basic things, and because of his openness to others in communication, the flexibility of his approach, he is able to communicate by communicating himself, so to speak, the essence of the Dharma in all situations and to people of all kinds. You mustn't imagine the bodhisattva burning the midnight oil, and swotting up on his abhidharmas, and swotting up on his Madhyamika so that if anybody pops him a question about any of these things, he'll be ready with the right answer [Laughter]. That is not quite, I believe, how the bodhisattva functions.

Though again, I don't want to go to extremes; no doubt, very often, a practical, working knowledge or general acquaintance, with a broader course (*words obscured by passing jet plane*) can be useful, as it can be, I don't say it always (words unclear).

So, "having estimated one's own capabilities one requireth a sure line of action". I don't know how literally this reflects the Tibetan text so I don't know how much weight, so to speak, we should attach to this word, "a sure line of action". But you need, you require a sure line of action. What do you think is meant by "a sure line of action"?

Manjuvajra: A definite plan, a thing you feel confident about.

S: Something you feel confident about, something which is consistent and progressive, something with which you're deeply in contact, which you feel sure about because it is, in the current idiom, it is you. You're, as it were, following and fulfilling in the deepest sense the law of your own being. The "sure line of action" is the direction, as it were, indicated by your own needs as a growing and evolving person.

Nagabodhi: Quite interesting, several times in what you've been saying, there's this correspondence between the law of your being, and your needs. So it's not so much your talents or your attributes that dictate what -

S: I think sometimes talents can be quite misleading.

Nagabodhi: It's your needfulness that defines you more than any positive attribute.

S: For instance someone may have developed a certain talent for quite neurotic reasons, so in encouraging them to use that talent, you're encouraging them almost to cultivate and perfect their neurosis. So if they have developed it out of neurotic reasons, in order to sort of work on the neurosis, you may have, temporarily at least, to discourage them from exercising the talent, where the talent in so far as it represents objective, neutral knowledge and experience can be returned to when they've eliminated the neurotic reasons for which they originally developed that talent; you don't lose the talent in the meantime. You just come back to it with

a completely changed attitude. You might, for instance, have got into teaching for the wrong reasons, but even if you have done that, your experience as a teacher remains there even if you give it up for a while and do something else, and eliminate, so to speak, the neurotic reasons for which you originally took up teaching. Having done that, you can safely go back to teaching if that's what you want to do in a deeper, better sense, and if that is what the needs of the situation seem to require.

So I've been thinking more and more that this is a very important question facing everybody who commits themselves and becomes ordained, "All right, what do I now do? What do I commit myself to, concretely?", and it may not be very easy to find that out; and the trying to find it out may constitute quite an important stage in your actual development over a number of years.

Mangala: You need a spiritual careers officer!

S: (laughs) A charya officer, hmm? You know, bodhisattva charya, dharmacharya, a charya officer, "Which yana should I follow please?" [Laughter]

Mangala: Aptitude test!

S: I mean, there are several people in the Friends who ended up doing things that originally they would never have considered themselves capable of doing, or qualified to do. A good example recently, I don't know how phasal it is, is one of our friends at Sukhavati going into the office and doing the accounts which I would not have quite expected to be the right sort of thing for him to do, but he seemed to be doing it extremely well, and enjoying it! So, it goes to show, doesn't it? All right let's go on to number 2.

(2) To carry out the commands of a religious preceptor, one requireth confidence and diligence.

S: Do you think this is as simple as it looks? Well, there's something that strikes us at once about this, isn't there?

Nagabodhi: Commands.

S: Yes, the word "commands". I don't know what Tibetan word this represents but the English word is certainly not appropriate in a spiritual context for reasons which I'm sure everybody is aware of. So what do you think is meant here? We've discussed this on another seminar, where one, as it were, makes a suggestion a command by accepting it, and recognising it. You see what I mean? Do you remember this? Is it that *Mitrata*? So let's paraphrase, or more correctly render "commands". What should it be paraphrased as, or more correctly rendered as, do you think?

Mangala: Recommendations.

S: It's more than that, don't you think? The word "command" has a certain force which I think is lacking in "recommendations", because there's also the quality of inspiration, isn't there surely?

Nagabodhi: Exhortation.

S: Exhortation, though that's a rather formal sort of word but is something more like that. It can even be an urging. You can urge a friend to do something as a friend without commanding him or exerting any sort of pressure. But you can really urge him to do it - you

really think that that is the best thing and you really communicate that strongly and forcibly without trying to influence him in a way that isn't fair.

Manjuvajra: By not being fair, do you mean using -

S: Using your position of friendship to influence him unduly. So let's say 'exhortations' for the time being. That seems to be the best sort of word we can get; so to carry out the exhortations of a religious preceptor, one requireth confidence and diligence. I think "confidence" here is *sraddha*, and "diligence" is *virya*. One requires faith and one requires energy.

Before we go into the faith and the energy, though, I think there are some as it were much more general things we need to go into. It's basically, how does one get things done? How does one get people to do things, assuming say you are in the position of the religious preceptor, or say you are in the position of the chairmen: you're in contact with a number of people, you can see things that need doing. You can see that it would be good for certain people to do certain things. How would you get them to do them, if they're not quite able to see that for themselves? In the world, how do you get people to do things?

Manjuvajra: Pay them.

S: That's one of the ways.

Nagabodhi: Coerce.

S: You coerce: in the world, you get people to do things by a judicious combination or not so judicious combination of stick and carrot. In this country nowadays, it's much more carrot than stick. Maybe this is the difference between the totalitarian countries and the democracies: the totalitarian countries tend to use stick more, and democracies tend to use carrot more, but the basic principle is, in a sense, the same. You see what I mean? But in either case there is inducement or even coercion actually because carrot is really as coercive as stick, did you but know it. So if you don't want to use carrot and you don't want to use stick, how are you going to get people to do things when they're not able to see quite for themselves what should be done, nor seem able to mobilise their energies to do them? This is the sort of question which will arise in a community.

Supposing someone doesn't do his share of the washing-up, how are you to deal with the situation? Are you going to promise him, that all right, if he does the washing-up like a good boy, you'll give him money on Friday evening for the cinema, or are you going to say, "Well look, if you don't do it, you'll jolly well be thrown out of the community"? You see, one is carrot, the other is stick. If you don't want to use carrot and you don't want to use stick, how are you going to deal with the situation? Chairmen and heads of communities, please tell us! What do you do? Do you, in moments of weakness, fall back on a subtle form of carrot or a subtle form of stick, or do you manage to deal with the situation some other way? It's quite a problem, isn't it? Otherwise, to the extent that you have to use a combination of carrot and stick, your spiritual community becomes a group. It may be quite a healthy, positive, well-functioning group but it is a group rather than a spiritual community. A spiritual community, by very definition, is a community within which neither stick or carrot are used.

All right, so if people within the spiritual community are not pulling their weight which means that, at least for the time being, or in that particular respect, they're not fully a member of the spiritual community, how do you deal with the situation and, as it were, restore them to the position of being a member of the spiritual community in the full sense?

Dharmamati: You have to try and inspire them with the ideals and vision of the community.

S: Yes, I think that is very important: you have to try to inspire them. You have to try to communicate enthusiasm for the ideals of the spiritual life and the ideals that the community exists to realise, so all right in a word, faith; you have to be able to inspire faith in the ideal; and what else do you have to be able to mobilise and to generate and to induce?

Nagabodhi: Energy.

S: Energy, yes, well commitment, yes; maybe commitment involves both of those, faith and energy. So therefore we find the verse saying "to carry out the commands of a religious preceptor, one requireth confidence and diligence", faith and energy. In other words, if someone is not carrying out the commands of a religious preceptor, the only thing that the religious preceptor can really do is to try to increase his faith, and to try to increase his energy. There's no question of spiritual bullying or blackmailing or anything of that sort. He must just patiently work on the situation and try to increase that person's faith and energy.

Mangala: Sometimes none of the other methods work anyway, stick or carrot! People don't come to....(words unclear)

S: Because eventually, they learn that they can get away with it, although again if one is actually functioning on the level of the group with people who have no aspirations to be individuals or to turn the group into a spiritual community, one can only function with the help of stick and carrot. That's all that will work, in more or less refined forms. If you're employing say someone to do something, someone from outside to do something for the spiritual community or the co-op, you'll have to employ either stick or carrot; for instance you'll have to pay them the going rate, the going wage, otherwise they won't do the work. Why should they from their point of view because they're not motivated by your ideals. But I think you have to be very careful because sometimes a spiritual community isn't in fact a spiritual community; it's a group, a positive group, which has its moment of being a spiritual community. One has to sometimes recognise that fact frankly from time to time when it's functioning at its best, it does actually become a spiritual community. So sometimes, one may have to recognise the fact that it isn't a spiritual community; more often than not, it's just a positive group, and recognising that, you may have to use a combination of stick and carrot, recognising you're not dealing with a spiritual community, you're dealing, to some extent at least, with a group, but using the stick and the carrot only provisionally for the time being, and trying to get people to the point where they can begin to be individuals and accept the responsibility of being individuals so that they don't need either the stick or the carrot.

Manjuvajra: I had an idea once for working in the cooperatives that there should be a sort of inverse wage structure so that if you came in at the bottom, you got paid quite highly, and as you got more and more involved, then you got paid less and less.

S: That's not a bad idea, actually. Well they do that in Zen monasteries where the new, young monks get the nicest and cleanest jobs to do and it's the old monks who have to do things like clean out the toilets and so on. I think this is quite an important thing, say in a community or a centre, that the chairman or the seniormost member of the community sometimes does, at least as a gesture because he may not have the time for it always, one of the more dirty or unpleasant jobs, and not give those always to the newcomers. So in a way, you have an inverse hierarchy.

Nagabodhi: The objection that I came up with, when Manjuvajra once suggested that was that if people joined a co-op on that basis, receiving say full wages, in other words having a mundane inducement, it's going to be very hard within the co-op to create the dana spirit; in a

way, I see it as the thin end of a wedge, that in a way people should come in on a very high crest of dana spirit, which might die down and then they're going to have to deal with it later. But somehow, it seems that....

S: Well, I'm assuming that Manjuvajra's only suggesting a quite relative difference, that the new people would only be paid, say, fully half of what they'd get outside, whereas the more committed person would only be paid a third or even a quarter. So there would still be that initial leap and initial giving required.

Devaraja: A bit almost like a sort of quarantine as well.

Nagabodhi: Adjustment time, to adjust their needs gradually.

S: Yes, well some need to do it gradually; others of course can do it all at one stroke, even prefer to do it that way. But I think this is one of the central problems or difficulties, organisationally speaking, to get people to do things out of a sense of enthusiasm and responsibility and willingness, to not have to try to coerce. I really sort of felt it quite a bit - this is going off the track a bit - when Sona had to chase so many Order Members up for their Order subscriptions, which is not a pleasant thing for Sona to have to do, and people should have enough sense of responsibility to do it themselves without expecting him to chase after them; and if they're not in a position financially to give just yet, let him know that that is the position and that they'll give when they can. So one can extend this in all sorts of ways to all sorts of fields. I got quite a little shock - at least it made me think - last year when I heard at Sukhavati they couldn't get anybody to volunteer to work on a Saturday - it might have been a Saturday afternoon - but when it was said that, all right, anyone working on that Saturday or the Saturday afternoon will be given five pounds, well, people were falling over themselves volunteering. So, yes, it was really so sad; I felt quite a shock when I heard this. There was no difficulty getting people to do it for five quid. So that was the carrot, a five quid carrot.

Nagabodhi: There is some talk of setting up cooperatives that can pay their workers. This is cooperatives within the Movement, that can pay their workers normal wages, to measure it with wages that would be received outside the Movement as a healthy principle.

S: But this would be abandoning the principle of need, of giving people what they need. You would be then within the market economy. You would then be functioning in accordance with the stick/carrot principle which you want to avoid within the Movement.

Devaraja: I think Nagabodhi's not putting across the full picture. There are certain aspects to this - point one is that if you pay what's deemed an acceptable wage in society's terms, that opens you up for work, well, first of all, that opens you up for possible grants from the small businesses grant aids schemes. Secondly it enables you to get presses in a print shop, it would enable you to get union membership which would then, in the case of the print shop at Sukhavati, would then enable you to get work from Tower Hamlets Council. The way that it had been discussed to bring this about would be that on paper, the person would appear to be paid that amount but they would then covenant -

S: Well that's a different matter entirely.

Nagabodhi: That's a different matter to what I was saying.

Devaraja: It's only ever been discussed in that light.

Nagabodhi: (Argues) No.

S: You'll have to watch this union membership business because it seems to me that the Unions certainly don't favour individuality or the development of individuality. I think we have to be very careful about bringing ourselves within the Union Movement, even to a very small extent, well, I would say not at all. It seems to me that the way the Unions function goes against the individual as such - if you're a Union member, you can't be an individual in certain respects; you're not permitted to. I think we really have to watch these things and I would suggest that nothing ever happens in any of these respects without a very full consultation with me, people not going ahead and doing these things where principles are involved, unless we all had a time to talk it over very thoroughly.

Devaraja: The fact is that what people have been paid, certainly at the moment, is just not enough.

S: Well, that's another matter. If it is not sufficient for them to meet their needs as a developing individual within the context of the Movement, that's quite another matter and that falls within our existing principle which is to give everybody what they need, and they give whatever they're able to give in terms of their own energy, interest, and so on. They take what they need, and give what they can. So if people aren't getting as much as they need, that should be put right as soon as we're in a financial position to do it; that requires no change of principles at all.

Nagabodhi: The principle that I was actually getting at was something raised in the context of the new *Windhorse Associates* Co-op, and somebody was suggesting that we should aim to pay ourselves - the workers should be paid an ordinary-type wage, and quite apart from the Union and all that side of it -

S: Your statement is ambiguous. Are you saying that you should be paying the same wage because it's paid by others, or you should be giving people what they need and that happens to coincide with what is regarded as a normal wage?

Nagabodhi: If I can go on, the point that the person was making was that rather than somebody giving all their work and being paid support plus a little pocket money and the co-op then dedicating its profits to charitable businesses, perhaps within the context of the premise there was room for a way of working in a co-op where the individual worker would receive a bigger wage than he needed; it would be up to him whether he then contributed that back into the charity, that there should be room within the Movement for that way of working.

S: I would say if someone wanted to work in that way, he shouldn't work within the framework of a co-op. Just go and set up his own business which will be his own responsibility, and give as much as he wanted. I think the co-operative principle is a different principle. There's no reason, in a way within the context of the Friends, why we shouldn't have a mixed economy so to speak; do you see what I mean? I don't exclude the possibility of some people, if you're impatient of restraints and having to consult with others too much, setting up something entirely of their own responsibility, making a lot of money and giving it to those centres and causes that they feel like giving it to. They can certainly do that if they want to. It doesn't have to be a co-operative set-up. I don't think we should be too rigid about that, but I don't think the co-operative principle itself should be diluted, that a co-op should be a co-op. If you don't like functioning in that way and you'd like to have money which was your own which you could give, all right, set up another kind of structure. There are people like that, I know.

Manjuvajra: So in a way, our form of the co-op goes one step further than the generally established form of co-op, isn't it? For example, supposing there was a group of people

within the Friends who wanted to earn their own money as individuals and then give it to whatever part of the Movement they wanted to, they could set up a co-op, they could be working together cooperatively but paying themselves much larger sums of money -

S: They could do that, but I would suggest that they'd have to be very clear about their own motivations because there's a very strong tendency within the Friends, as you know - it's a universal tendency - for people to toe the line officially, while getting away with it unofficially. You see what I mean? There's a big natural tendency of this sort; it should just not be a form of that kind of thing.

Devaraja: Can you say more about that, give an example of toeing the line officially and getting away with it unofficially?

S: Well, it's very often doing something without acknowledging it or without acknowledging it to other people. You sort of toe the line, or what is regarded as "the line", about, say, relationships, but you sort of insist that your relationship is not, in fact, a relationship; it's something else. So in your own eyes, you don't have a relationship; you merely spend every night with the same person. (laughter) You see what I mean? Because people are creatures of conformity; they don't want to incur the disapproval of what they regard as the group; they'll bend over backwards to do what the group or what they think the group wants them to do or what the group requires; at the same time they will equally bend over backwards to do what they want to do, even if the two are in conflict, or really in conflict. So I don't want this to be an instance of that, people pay lip-service to the ideal of a co-op but actually they want their own money in their own pocket to spend on whatever they want to spend it on; and to say, well, that will give them the opportunity of giving in whatever way they please; that is just a euphemism; one doesn't want that; so honesty is required; and if one says one needs more, well, what does one mean by needing? It could be that books are a need, records are a need, sure, holidays are a need, yes, but be open about it; not say well - there's been a bit of a tendency just with a few people to say they're going off on solitary retreat but actually it's a holiday, because "solitary retreat" is approved of, everyone will pat you on the back and send you off on solitary retreat with their blessing, so to speak, whereas if you say you're going away on holiday, you might not get quite the same sort of approval, so it may be a bit "dodgy" as it were, well, it's half a solitary retreat but it's a bit of holiday too, but anyway, you say "solitary retreat" and hope that the bit of meditation you do while you're away will keep things all right with your own conscience! (laughs) You see what I mean?

You just have to be so careful. And I think this is also why it's important that people should do what they want to do, and not just do things out of a spirit or feeling of conformity.

Devaraja: I had an idea that in actual fact, we shouldn't place a personal allowance at all to people, so that it's almost like we just have a pot, and people working in the co-op should literally just take what they need.

S: Well, I believe some communities, or at least one or two communities have had that sort of situation with a common purse, and I believe it has worked. Where was there a common purse?

Nagabodhi: There are common purses in most communities but people's weekly pocket money is usually set and given out individually. I don't know of any has it been done Devaraja?

Kamalasila: Well, we have; we've got that sort of common purse at Tyn-y-Ddol. Basically, if you need something -

S: You don't have pocket money apart from that?

Kamalasila: Well, no.

S: I'm sure that that could work if the people involved are sincere and responsible.

Mangala: Probably works okay at Tyn-y-Ddol because there's nothing to spend your money on. (Masses of laughter).

Kamalasila: We do find things to spend it on!

S: Oh yes, I'm sure; and even if it's only little cakes down the local shop or something like that, or stamps.

Devaraja: I really feel that even the idea of your personal pocket money, is still like the thin edge of a wedge.

S: You may well be right.

Devaraja: It's an insidious thing.

S: It's as though you're entitled to pocket money, even if you've not actually got anything that you want to spend it on in that week; you've got that secure feeling, you've got that five quid in your pocket.

Devaraja: "This is my little stash that I can just" or "This week, I've got three pounds so I can just spend it all on indulgence".

Manjuvajra: That's the area where I think it would come in, like if you were just taking money out of a strictly communal purse, then there would be certain things that you would feel very uncomfortable about taking money out of the purse for.

S: Well I think this creates what we were talking about in the morning, an existential situation. Why do you feel guilty, for instance, about taking money out of the kitty to go to the pictures? Why should you? If it's really going to be some unskilful, pornographic film, well, you shouldn't be going to see it, anyway. It's something well let's say for want of a better term, something uplifting and inspiring, well, why shouldn't you go and see it with money from the kitty. There's a little incident that happened when I was in Glasgow last, at *Heruka*, the little incidents sometimes impress me quite a lot, and I think about them, people even don't know I'm thinking about them now or have noticed, or they haven't noticed themselves, that one evening - I think it was just after supper - people were talking, and Ajita says, "I'm not quite sure if I'll go to the class this evening, or I'll go to the pictures". So it struck me that this was quite unusual because he didn't feel any inhibition in announcing that he hadn't quite made up his mind whether to go to the class or to go to the pictures. He clearly felt equally free to do either and didn't feel any pressure from anybody to either do this or do that, and that is comparatively rare. So why should you not feel free to take money out of the kitty to go to the pictures, if that is what you feel you really want to do, or in a manner of speaking, need to do? But it's true that people will be happy about taking money out of the kitty for a 'worthy' purpose, maybe a bottle of medicine or a stamp for a letter to your mother, (laughter), or something like that; but for a drink at the pub or for a picture at the cinema, they probably feel guilty. But why? So if you have that kitty, it will bring you up against questions like that. What makes you feel guilty in the one case and not guilty in the other?

If it's really something unskilful, well, you shouldn't be doing it anyway, or paying for it, even with your own money, if there is such a thing as your own money.

Mangala: But life would be hell, wouldn't it! (laughter)

S: Well, how do you manage in your communities in Brighton?

Mangala: We have five quid pocket money like most places. At least you don't feel too guilty about spending that.

S: Again, there's another aspect: money is power, money is potency. I mean, is it good psychologically, in a way, to deprive people of money, completely. Admittedly, from a certain point of view the pocket money is the thin end of the wedge, but can you not have that, at least in the case of the majority of people? Do the majority of people not need money, not just as money to spend on certain things but almost as a symbol of the possibilities of spending, i.e. in Freudian terms of potency, so to speak? Is this not also, in a way, a need at least, subjectively and psychologically?

Mangala: Is that not, though, a kind of a pseudo-potency rather than a real one?

S: Well, what is real and what is pseudo? Because the money does represent real power because you can actually go and buy something.

Mangala: But I mean, why not just take it then, out of the kitty, say, rather than....

S: Because if it's the kitty, it's communal, it's not yours, and hypothetically, you need to feel that it is yours. You exercise your power.

Nagabodhi: It seems to tie up with almost a two-way approach to individuality: one which is through a kind of individualism, and one which is through a total surrender because there seems to be a route to individuality through both routes.

S: Yes, well, there may also be a middle way, because supposing someone is inducted into a community; he is at once deprived of his pocket money, his personal belongings, he has a corner of a room, he has nothing of his own, he is told what to do, he is given jobs; would this necessarily help him to grow as an individual? It might have a very thwarting and stunting effect on him. So what do you do? You allow him to have certain things of his own, a few books, a few clothes, maybe a sleeping space, and a bit of pocket money. Admittedly, in a way, it's a concession from the point of view of the highest ideal; maybe one shouldn't even say "concession", it's an acceptance of the principle of step by step.

And clearly the aim is to be dependent upon as little as possible, and be complete within yourself and not to need any bolstering up by property and objects. But it's very difficult to require that of somebody right from the beginning, depending on the person. Some people seem able to do this, seem very non-attached. I've seen with some especially very young people, they just don't bother about books and clothes and all that, don't accumulate things; they're more complete in themselves. I think we have to be really careful about applying the same sort of rule to everybody; and some people would probably need a few personal things which, in a sense, were theirs, at least to begin with.

Anyway, we've got, though perhaps quite usefully, quite far away from what we were originally talking about: "To carry out the commands of a religious preceptor, one requireth confidence and diligence"; in other words, the religious preceptor should try to encourage the development in the disciple, or mitra or whatever, of faith and energy because it's only

through faith and energy, and the harnessing of faith and energy, that things will get done within the context of the spiritual community, not by means of a combination of stick and carrot; and you should dispense with stick and carrot as much as possible, progressively.

[End of tape one tape two]

Devaraja: Yeah, it's quite interesting - that particular discussion - because this last job I did on a film, it got to a really bad point. There was so much overtime that had to be done - it was american producers who were really pushing it to get it done on time - and it got to a point where the particular members of the union which I belong to got together and said "No, we're not going to do it, we're just tired of it, we want to go home", you know, and then the director was saying "Well, you know, maybe if we paid them more money".

S: Perhaps he was thinking it was a bargaining ploy.

Devaraja: Yeah, and I said "No, it's just the time. We've had enough". And it finally ended up with the producer coming onto the studio floor and doing a sob story: "Aw fellas, gee, you know, we're not going to get this done and this actress is going back to the States", etc, etc. And that was an element of coercion. That was like emotional blackmail. But it was quite interesting, it provoked a whole line of thought. I'd been very dissatisfied with the situation and I felt unhappy. I just wondered if working for Americans was always like this but there was and it just struck me that that was the element that was missing entirely - that there was no inspiration because I've worked with people on a production and if the director can really inspire them with his ideas then they'll work virtually around the clock to get it done.

S: Well, they feel the energy because of the inspiration so they can keep going but otherwise there comes a point where even money won't keep you going - even the prospect of financial reward will not keep you going.

Devaraja: I mean there's some of these guys getting, I mean like seven thousand...

S: This is happening quite largely in British industry. There is a point beyond which people won't work more for more money apparently. And there is nothing to inspire them to work. I mean the idea of working for the good of the country - that doesn't inspire them any more it seems. They've got enough for themselves and their families. They're prepared to strike for more money but they're not prepared to work for more money. I mean, the carrot has lost its savour and the employer, least of all, is not in the position any longer of being able to apply the stick. The stick is now in the hands of the unions. The employer is able to operate most of the time only with the carrot which has very definite limitations. Even a big juicy carrot won't work any more. Anyway, perhaps we should pass on now. Oh - it's teatime!

[Tea Break]

S: I was just thinking....Well, I was thinking quite a lot about the co-ops, especially after this five quid for working on Saturday stunt at Sukhavati. I think this was last year. I thought a co-op will not really work or succeed - I'm talking about financially now, leave aside in other respects - unless everybody in the co-op really believes in the ideals of the co-op and the movement the co-op belongs to and really puts themselves into it wholeheartedly. Otherwise it will not work as well as ordinary wage slavery.

Mangala: When you say ideals, do you mean the spiritual ideals?

S: Yes, I mean the spiritual ideals here. In our case, the ideals of the FWBO.

Nagabodhi: If you take away a mundane incentive to work and yet that's not replaced by a spiritual incentive you're left with nothing.

S: Exactly. Yes, exactly.

Nagabodhi: No energy. No....

Mangala: I mean, couldn't some people in a sense get off on just a friendship.

S: There are a few people. There are sometimes people like that. They're not very common but they do exist. People who just help you and work really well with you and for you out of a feeling of sort of friendliness and human warmth. But you can't rely upon that indefinitely.

Devaraja: It's interesting. That seems to be mainly amongst the quite young. I've noticed that around the co-ops at Sukhavati. There's two or three kids that come and help out in the cafe. They just really enjoy being there.

S: Well, work is still play for them. That's a very happy state to be in. and also I think in the context of the co-op, everybody needs to be imbued with the ideals, otherwise you'll get a minority of people, or at least not all the people, carrying virtually the whole burden. And, however good-hearted they may be, sooner or later they'll start feeling resentful that others are not pulling their weight. It's really important that everybody in a co-op pulls his weight, does really as much as he can which doesn't mean that everybody will necessarily be doing exactly the same amount because people's capacities do differ but everybody is doing what he can and is seen to be doing what he can. Otherwise a co-op will not work. It will not be successful. It will not be successful as a business.

Nagabodhi: Or as a spiritual practice.

S: Or as a spiritual practice. It certainly won't be a spiritual practice. You'll have a few harassed people trying to get the work done and get the others working. And that isn't a very desirable state of affairs. (Pause)

Nagabodhi: I think the positive group is really essential because a lot of people do give up their jobs. I know this happened to me. You maybe look out on people working within a spiritual community and you think how easy it must be for them - working for something they believe in and so on - so you give up your job. But I think most people, after a while, really run into the difficulty of having to motivate themselves because they haven't realised how much they were motivated by career considerations, financial considerations, and it does take a while to absorb that impact before you're firing on spiritual inspiration and I think that it's at that point that you really need the positive group.

S: And spiritual friends. Well, more than the positive group. You need spiritual friends. I mean the positive group will keep you going for a while but ultimately you need spiritual friends and spiritual ideals.

Nagabodhi: To carry you - to lift you -

S: Yes. [Pause] So again, you see, you can't really do something unless you want to do it. It's really very disheartening to be trying to work with people who don't really want to be doing that particular thing - to be trying to get them to do it, cajoling them into doing it, persuading them, threatening them - it's very disheartening. You're much better off with a small group of people all of whom really want to be doing that thing and are really working, than a larger group including a number of relatively reluctant people. It's less work doing their work than

getting them to do it. It really is. I think that you have to be very careful about accepting people into co-ops really. It's not enough that someone's got a bit fed-up with the rat-race and thinks he'd like to do something pleasant in company with pleasant people and just get enough to live on and some pocket money etc, etc. That isn't really enough, not nearly enough. You might survive like that for a few weeks or a few months but not much longer.

Manjuvajra: The thing that I'm still not very clear about is the matter you touched upon about the feeling of personal potency in having money at your disposal.

S: Well, put it this way - maybe I go back to some of my own experiences. For well over two years, maybe three years, I didn't handle money, I had no money. That was mainly during my wandering period and for some time after I was in Kalimpong. So I was noticing that if you didn't have money there were all sorts of things that automatically you couldn't do which meant that the absence of money inhibited you from doing things that you wanted to do or even needed to do, and therefore blocked in a sense the expression of your energy. You become quite, in a way, helpless and dependent upon others and this did have a positive side - I think for me on the whole it had a very positive effect. But on the basis of that experience of mine I can certainly imagine some people finding it frustrating rather than anything else. I don't want to sort of be speaking of in terms of potency in a purely sort of Freudian sense or connecting it with sexuality and so on, no. But it's as though money under modern conditions is the sort of instrument by which or through which or by means of which you give expression to what you're able to do, which helps you to do what you're able to do and want to do.

Mangala: But surely that's only one instrument. Presumably there are others.

S: Well I think it's a very important one. If you have that then you can get any of the others virtually.

Mangala: Well, presumably you weren't handling money. Say you decided that you needed a book. Well presumably you can just go to someone and say "I need a book. Can you buy me this book?"

S: Well no, actually, I wasn't in that position at that time, not by any means really.

Mangala: What I mean is, presumably you have to sort of draw on other, um, you have to adapt, you have to function in a slightly different way. Instead of just going out and buying that thing, or whatever, you have to somehow get what you need in a different way.

S: But you sometimes have to do it in an indirect way. I've seen monks doing this. I knew, for instance, a monk who wanted a new pair of sandals and he had to sort of say indirectly or, "My sandals are worn out and I'm a poor monk and I haven't got any money to buy any" in the hearing of some well-to-do person, you see. I don't think that is really very good.

Mangala: But I mean in the actual practical case we were talking about here, it is like just having a jar with money in which people could take money from if they needed it and as and when they needed it. It's not as if we're depriving people of money altogether but it's like it's there if they need it. If they need a pair of sandals they could take the money and go and buy them.

S: It is almost as though money is an extension of a person's own being. I mean their own money.

Mangala: Yes, it's almost a bit like borrowed feathers. It gives you a potency which isn't

actually yours.

S: No. I don't think it really gives you anything. It enables you to express.

Mangala: I'd like to suggest that, I think that if people earn a lot of money for this reason, to sort of boost their own lack of real confidence in themselves...if they're earning a thousand pounds a week, then they -

S: This does happen certainly.

Mangala: If they've just got like a jar which you've got to put your hand in if you want to go and buy a packet of cigarettes or something, well you have to rely on something much more basic then. You're thrown right back on yourself.

S: Ah, but this is the point I'm making. When a person is completely new, I don't think you can always ask them to throw themselves back on themselves in that total sort of way all at once.

Mangala: I wasn't actually suggesting that all new people should be put in that position. I was just sort of trying to bring out the sort of the value of perhaps being in that position.

S: Well yes, I certainly think it has a great value.

Mangala: Whereas you wouldn't misappropriate the potency which money gives you - not exactly misappropriate - but where you wouldn't kind of use money as a way of boosting a rather weak ego shall we say. You know, you'd just be there as it were, you wouldn't have all the props which people normally have.

S: But I would say that a person who finds it convenient to have, say personal money, etc, etc, is not necessarily a person with a weak ego and so on. Sometimes it's just more convenient because you might want to do something quickly or you might want an amount that isn't in the kitty, what are you going to do then?

Manjuvajra: There's also the kind of, when you're thinking in terms of the movement, I mean the sort of things that we're setting up, history doesn't give you a lot of trust, I don't think, in the kind of trust that's needed for that sort of situation, you see what I mean? I mean supposing that when we've got cooperatives that are factories with maybe fifty people working in one co-op, are they all going to be able to feel that kind of trust all the time?

S: Well, everybody's money would be nobody's money, if you see what I mean. There'd be people taking money out - if there were fifty they probably wouldn't think "Well this belongs to us all" or "People need this, people need that". They'd just sort of take out without any regard for other people and what they might be needing.

Mangala: I suppose in a way it perhaps ought to be like that.

S: What, you fight it out in the end and adjust it?

Mangala: Well no, I mean, I suppose what I mean is there oughtn't to be that problem.

S: I think that also if you're having to dip into a communal purse, it can involve you in rather stultifying conflicts with each other, because you might be thinking "Well look, I want five pounds for a new record". There's only ten pounds in the kitty. Well, if it was your own five pounds there'd be no conflict. You'd say "All right, I've only got five pounds, I'm going to

spend it all on the record". But if it was the community's money there's only going to be five pounds left, you'd think "Somebody might want a book, or somebody might want to go to the pictures, and someone might want a stamp - am I justified in taking this money?". It sets up this sort of problem, doesn't it? But you don't always want to be faced by that sort of conflict as soon as you want to spend some money or to get something.

Mangala: I suppose, clearly, it isn't for everybody, that sort of -

S: No, well this is all that I'm saying. I certainly regard it as an ideal to be aimed at. I mean, in a way, it should be what society as a whole aims at. everybody getting what they need and giving what they can - the well known words.

Mangala: It'd be worth trying though, wouldn't it. I mean, I don't know if Tyn-y-Ddol is a very good example because there isn't really anything for you to spend money on.

Kamalasila: Well actually since you say that, I don't think that's true. I mean if people want to buy a pair of shoes or a pair of socks or want to go to the cinema or anything that most people want, they can just get it, you know.

Mangala: I mean is there actually much opportunity to do that, being what five miles from Corwen or something?

Kamalasila: Well, I should think there's as much opportunity as there is when you're working in a co-op and having to go to classes in the evening.

Mangala: Do you think it works well?

Kamalasila: Yeah, I think it works quite well.

S: I think it probably works better with a small number of people and everyone is more likely to act consensively.

Manjuvajra: And also, in a small community you don't get so much of a split between the workers and the administrators. That's where I see you could get a bit of conflict.

S: The administrators get perks as it were.

Manjuvajra: Yeah. If you've got a community or a co-op of fifty people. Supposing forty of those will be just mainly working. They'll be packing food or cutting wood or whatever. There'll be another ten of those people that are involved more with the managing and the running of the business.

S: Which in the eyes of the workers is not work.

Manjuvajra: Yes. And also, you always seem to get an antagonism between the two being set up. I mean, that seems to be what happens.

S: You get it in Britain. I'm told you don't get it in all other countries. It doesn't exist in Germany, I'm told. For instance, I'm told that in Germany, in the factories, even the top management and the ordinary floor worker use the same canteen and sit together, sit side by side, which is totally unknown - again, so I'm told - in Britain, where they're very conscious of the ... there's the canteen for the workers and the, maybe the cafe for the office people and the restaurant for the upper management - all separate, with separate types of food and everything. They don't have this in Germany - West Germany. This is what I read. I mean,

one of the directors can be sitting side by side with a machinist - just queue up together for food.

Manjuvajra: Shall I just finish what I'm saying? Where you get that kind of situation you get a distrust setting up between the people working in the different areas.

S: I'm sure you do, yes.

Manjuvajra: It seems to me to have a completely common purse in that sort of situation you've really got to overcome all these really fundamental difficulties. I don't think it's enough to just sort of push them aside and say, well, they're unreal or whatever. In some way we've got to really kind of face up to that and sort that one out.

Devaraja: One cafe I worked for was in Norwich they used to have a chairman's loo, which, whenever he arrived, security would come and unlock it and he just was the only person that was allowed to use that loo.

Manjuvajra: There is also the fact that the administrators, even the treasurers, they do have the feeling of potency because they do have the ability to make decisions, make financial decisions and to get things done, and to do things, whereas you, I mean I've got to call it your workshop, your shop floor worker, doesn't have those kind of decisions, doesn't make, doesn't have that kind of....

S: Well under a certain type of set-up - under a certain type of set-up - not inevitably so.

Manjuvajra: Right.

Nagabodhi: [speaking very softly] Surely within our co-ops you have some - a good say in the decision-making (words unclear) the spiritual mode, the spiritual sense, (words unclear), the day to day running of the business, the shop floor workers are going to be in the meetings with the other people who simply administrate the decisions of the cooperative as a whole. There shouldn't be that (words unclear).

S: Well I think what very often happens is that people may express their own wishes and opinions and desires but are not prepared to take responsibility for the implementation of those. But they expect that to be the work of the administration, as it were, not realising it's everybody who is responsible in his or her own way. [Pause]

For instance, in a community. I was thinking about this a bit in connection with Sukhavati recently - it's as though members of the community sort of expect that the order members or the council or whatever will take decisions about certain things, that they don't have the responsibility - if they are asked or told to do those things they will do them, but not that they will see that it needs doing and after consulting maybe one or two people just get down to the job and do it, no, they don't regard it as their responsibility, you see what I mean? I think you can get this within the co-op too, if you're not careful.

Manjuvajra: That comes from the same -

S: Because if you just see that the corridor is really dirty, the natural thing to do is to go and get a dust-pan and brush and sweep it up. But no, you wait for someone to raise the matter at a house-meeting and the house-keeper should get a bit heavy and it'd be made somebody's job or responsibility, you see what I mean? In that way, a few people are sort of keeping their eyes open for what needs to be done, raising it at the appropriate meeting and getting the others to do it. The reason is the others are not actually accepting and exercising their equal

share of responsibility. If they all did, then a lot fewer matters need be raised at the appropriate meetings anyway because the things would have been dealt with, they would have been done. There'd be no problem of dirty loos or dirty corridors or doors left open or windows broken because people will be taking responsibility for all those things - individually - and attending to them as they notice them, if necessary in consultation with somebody else.

But otherwise, if you're not careful, people will start thinking "Well, it's not my responsibility, it's the administration's responsibility, if they want it done well they'll ask us" - that sort of attitude, which is no good at all. So very often it's the workers who make the administration into the administration almost as a means of avoiding responsibility and not doing certain things.

Manjuvajra: As far as I know, no-one has ever succeeded in overcoming that particular, that whole structure.

S: The world as a whole, you mean?

Manjuvajra: Yes.

S: I'm sure it's overcome within genuinely spiritual communities of one kind or another, yes. But only I think within that sort of context - or in a very existential situation with either the great big carrot or a great big stick or in time of war. (Pause).

All right, let's go back to the text. This is quite good, exploring them at our leisure, isn't it? All right, three.

(3) To avoid error in choosing a guru the disciple requires knowledge of his own faults and virtues.

S: Well, there's an expression here with which one could quarrel. What do you think that is?

Manjuvajra: "Choosing a guru".

S: "Choosing a guru". Especially "choosing". Do you think this, in fact, is possible? What does it imply?

Manjuvajra: It implies a purely conscious rational decision and that a guru is available to be chosen.

S: Yes.

Nagabodhi: Well it implies that that is the nature of the relationship, it's as if the guru is a commodity.

S: A friend of mine in India, in Bombay in fact, used to inveigh against this sort of attitude very strongly within the Indian context. He used to go to the other extreme, so to speak, and say "It is never the disciple who chooses the guru, it is always the guru who chooses the disciple" in the sense that the guru just happens to see someone and thinks "Ah, he's a likely one" and keeps his eye on him and so manages things that eventually that particular person gets into the spiritual path. But what do you think is meant here? Perhaps we shouldn't sort of take this word "choosing" too seriously, though since it's used in English we've really no alternative in a way, but, not taking it too seriously, what do you think is meant?

Nagabodhi: There are going to be some people whose exhortations you take more seriously than others because you trust them.

Devaraja: I suppose it implies a sort of situation of people following sophists and charlatans.

S: But, I mean, perhaps one should say - should one even think in terms of choosing a guru? What does that suggest, what does that imply, that whole sort of attitude of choosing a guru. Do you think that Nagabodhi is say justified in using the expression 'commodity'? I mean what is actually happening when you're choosing a guru? I mean somebody wrote a book called "Hunting the Guru" in India.

Voice: There's one guru for all, for you, sort of exclusive -

S: Yes, there is that, there is that.

Voice: There is nobody else that ever can give you any good advice.

S: It's almost like, so to speak, the one person who was born in a different kind of relationship, just for you and you've got to find that one person in the world who is destined for you. So there is sometimes talk of the "destined" guru but I think one has to be very careful using this sort of language. Perhaps you shouldn't be too choosy because in insisting you must have this kind of good friend or that kind of good friend you're overlooking or missing out on all the good friends by whom you're surrounded already, from whom you could learn an awful lot if only you were a bit more open and less rigid in your ideas. And very often - I've noticed this in connection with the Tibetans I've met, and also Western Buddhists - they often get the idea that only the greatest guru is good enough for them, which is an absolute mistake, according to Gampopa's *"Jewel Ornament of Liberation"*, anyway. If you take the expression "guru" seriously it means someone who is more advanced and more developed than you are. But are you really able to recognise someone who is more developed than you are? Is this really possible - especially when you're a beginner on the Path. Have you any means of knowing?

Kamalasila: In which case, what is really happening when you do?

Voice: I don't really see what you mean?

Kamalasila: Well, if you choose a guru and you're not in a position really to choose a guru then what are you doing? What are you doing?

Voice: I don't know.

S: Well, it is essentially a question of communication, isn't it? It's a question of human communication. You come into contact with other people, and you try to enter into communication with them, and as your communication becomes deeper and more sincere you get a sort of feeling or a sort of experience that at least in that situation and to that extent you are gaining more perhaps than the other person. That you are getting more from the other person than the other person is getting from you, so relatively speaking, he is the good friend, he is the Kalyana Mitra - at least in that situation and for that purpose and to that extent. In some other situation the roles possibly could be reversed, you see what I mean? I think what usually happens, or maybe the healthiest thing to happen, is that you don't come into contact with gurus at all, or go looking for gurus at all - you come into contact with ordinary people who are disciples. But because they are disciples and you're not yet a disciple, or they're a bit more experienced than you and you develop a positive sort of relationship with them,

establish a real communication and maybe you go from a less experienced to a more experienced disciple as your capacity for communication increases and eventually you are able to enter into meaningful communication with the person whom all the people in that particular network - I don't want to use the word group - look up to as the good friend, as it were, of all of them. There's nobody in relation to whom he isn't a good friend. And so he can, as it were, be labelled the guru of that particular group or that particular community.

But you, as it were, work your way up to him, so to speak, as your communication with all the good friends within that particular network, that particular spiritual communication, improves and deepens. You're naturally led to the person with whom the best and deepest communication is possible and from whom you can gain most. That would seem to be the natural order of things to me - not that you should think well, who is the person most highly developed because that's the person who can help me most, I'll go straight to him and be his disciple - that would not seem to be the most positive and healthy approach. So I think one shouldn't think in terms of choosing a guru but of hopefully meeting disciples - meeting sincere disciples. I mean, "to avoid error in choosing a guru" - one cannot but fall into error in choosing a guru. In fact, in trying to choose, you've already committing an error. But it isn't also - even in the case of entering into friendly relations with disciples, of first of all knowing your own faults and virtues - I think that will emerge only in the course of your communication with them, to any great or real extent anyway. I mean, in a sense the idea of someone choosing a guru is quite presumptuous. I really wonder how this saying got in here.

Mangala: Do you think it's just a bad translation?

S: No, I don't actually, I'd almost go so far as to say - I mean within the Western context - avoid gurus! Have nothing to do with gurus! You couldn't even recognise them if they were around and those that seem to be gurus probably aren't, especially those who are advertised as such, but just have a good positive contact with people who seem to be really good disciples, really good followers of a particular spiritual tradition and if there is a guru lurking somewhere in the background you'll meet him sooner or later.

Manjuvajra: You don't think this could be a kind of attempt to push people away from actually looking for a guru, do you, by saying that the disciple acquires knowledge of his own faults and virtues?

S: It could be, you could look at it like that. But if you do acquire knowledge of your own faults and virtues you'll see that you've got so many faults and so few virtues that you couldn't possibly avoid error in choosing a guru and therefore you shouldn't even try to do that, but of course Tibetans do choose gurus - the guru usually meaning the tantric guru, who confers the wong - you know the tantric initiation which is supposed to invest you with tremendous power - that magic word 'power' - which even Tibetan Buddhists misunderstand. So you go around looking for those powerful gurus, the one's who have got a reputation for giving really 'powerful' initiations, so that you go along and you get a 'powerful' initiation and you become 'powerful' yourself, you see, you are 'charged' with power.

So, choosing a guru means choosing the guru who is the most powerful, not to say potent in giving these initiations. So you become similarly powerful and potent having received the initiation. This is what choosing a guru means for the ordinary Tibetan Buddhist - very often.

Mangala: Would you not say that even that is better than nothing. I mean if there's half a dozen gurus, you know, if you decide, right, well, he seems pretty good, I think he's the best from what I hear, so I'll go to him, I mean -

S: Yes, it's better than nothing. It would depend on the guru - how he handled you once

you'd come along, however unskilful your motivation might have been. I said the best way, the most healthy and natural way is to establish contact with disciples. I think your natural modesty should prevent you from going straight to the guru so to speak.

Mangala: But is that actually the Buddhist tradition? Is that actually how it's taught? Where does this whole 'guru' thing come from? it seems to be part of a tradition which seems to have -

S: Yes, well, 'guru' in the sense of Kalyana Mitra is simply someone who is more experienced than you. In modern times, especially nowadays in the West, 'guru' has got quite a special meaning which actually it didn't have before at all. In India, 'guru' is more often used in the sense of 'teacher' in a quite ordinary sense. The schoolteacher is called the gurubaba or the female teacher the gurumaya. The word guru is used in that sense quite ordinarily and colloquially - it doesn't mean anything special. But nowadays you've got a class almost of professional gurus, so this word guru itself has become a not very skilful word to use.

Kamalasila: You could use the word lama.

S: 'Lama' means superior - spiritual superior. It's supposed to translate 'ubarra' or 'utama' in Sanskrit - a spiritual superior, yes, a lama is a guru, a guru is a lama.

Kamalasila: They're the same.

S: Roughly, roughly yes.

Kamalasila: So in Tibetan Buddhism you don't have this, or you didn't until recently get this, concept of a guru as being somebody powerful and sort of charged and that sort of thing.

S: Well, no. On certain levels there's always misunderstandings and it does appear that one got that in Tibet on certain levels always - that people look upon the guru as some sort of powerful magician who'll bless the crops and keep away illness and all that sort of thing - keep away demons.

Mangala: What about, I don't know enough but it doesn't appear to be the same kind of tradition in the Theravada.

S: No. There, the idea of what we now call a guru is very muted. I think this is mainly because, in the Theravada, the most serious of all offenses is falsely to lay claim to transcendental attainments. They've, in a sense, almost taking it to an extreme, that no-one ever, as a matter of sort of spiritual good manners, as it were, lays claim to any transcendental attainments, so it's quite impossible for anyone to set himself up as a guru figure within the Theravada context, and even difficult for his disciples to set him up in that way - at least very very much more difficult than it is within the Mahayana-cum-Vajrayana context. To that extent the Theravada is indeed characterised by a sort of sobriety which is quite positive and healthy, I must say. You very rarely find extravagant claims made on behalf of any monk or any teacher. But that is very common in Mahayana and especially in Vajrayana circles.

Mangala: It would appear, at least from a superficial point of view, that Tibetan Buddhism especially would seem to be the only sort of real one-to-one tradition, apart from the Theravada in Japan that very much a question of a young novice going into a monastery, and there's this great lama at the head of a monastery who's a guru, and you relate to him very much -

S: Well, actually you don't when you join a monastery as far as I've gathered from my friends. You relate to the one who's next above you as it were. You might not even meet the head of the whole monastery. You might just see him on ceremonial occasions or when there's a big puja which he might

[end of side one side two]

be presiding over or leading - you'd be concerned with your own personal teacher who'd be, perhaps, a senior monk, or the head of your little group, your college, as it were, within the overall monastic structure, because there might be hundreds of monks within that monastery, even thousands. They wouldn't all be enjoying a close personal relationship with the Head monk or Abbot or Lama or Rimpoche or whoever he was. (Pause)

Also I think it's important to understand that, in a way, if you're in contact with the disciple you are in fact in contact with the guru also on a lower level, you see what I mean? You mustn't separate the disciple from the guru too rigidly or too strictly.

Mangala: Also in Tibetan Buddhism you have the Four Refuges - the Lama and then the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha which again...

S: I think it would be better in this context, even though, to think of the guru as the spiritual friend - the person from whom you do actually learn something. It's not that someone has the official position of 'Guru' and you're expected to regard him as such but you got into contact, into communication with someone in an ordinary human way, maybe just as a friend, and over the months and years you discover that there is more in him maybe than met the eye, and that you are in the position of receiving from him much more than he is in the position of receiving from you, even though there may be, in certain ways and in certain times and in certain contexts, lateral exchange. But on the whole, you are indebted to him rather than he is indebted to you.

So I think it is better, as it were, to discover that in a natural way rather than getting into contact with someone who is officially labelled as a Guru and regarding him as a guru simply because that is what he is officially labelled as, even if you are not able to sort of see it yourself - maybe you can have a sort of distant regard or faith because you know that a lot of the people you look up to look up to him in turn. But I think it is more healthy and more positive and, in the long run, more helpful, just to establish a natural human communication, and allow any relative difference of level, so to speak, to emerge naturally, rather than having it laid down in advance, so to speak officially.

Some people do come along expecting to be treated as gurus even though one has got no means of knowing whether they are or not. The fact that they expect to be treated as such - are not even capable of behaving as an ordinary human being - in a way, shows that they aren't gurus - they're ecclesiastical figureheads or whatever, or great scholars or just pretentious people, but they aren't really gurus. a guru is not an official position within the group.

Manjuvajra: Would you draw a distinction between the kind of initiation that one would get in the Tibetan tradition, in the Tantric tradition, and the kind of initiations that people seem to get from figures like guru Maraji?

S: I'm not sure what they do get from people like Guru Maraji. He also functions through his own senior disciples or people occupying senior positions within the movement, so it is very difficult to say. But one can say that when people come with great expectations, and when there is a lengthy ceremony, and it's made very impressive, and solemn and so on, well, something may well happen, but I would think that if it's built up to in that sort of way, it's

more likely to be a psychological than a spiritual, much less still, a transcendental, experience. But something happens which impresses people - at least for a while - there seems no reason to doubt.

Manjuvajra: I have this theory that you find that before people go for these initiations they're told for a long time before but they don't happen. They're put outside of the group so that then when they actually go through their initiation they're received into the group and there's a sort of psychological tension released.

S: Well I'm sure it happens in some cases. You find this technique used say in Maoist China.

Manjuvajra: Yeh....do you?

S: Well, these confession sessions or trials even when someone is made to confess even to things that they didn't do, but they confess to them and weep, and then are forgiven and received back and have a tremendous emotional experience etc, etc. Or they might well be confessing to things that they'd never actually done, but their confession is none the less sincere, because the group requires it. It's the means of reconciliation with the group, and they desperately want to be reconciled with the group. The group is all in all to them, the group is their world. They cannot bear to exist in a state of alienation from the group or experiencing the hostility of the group towards them. They will pay any price to get back into the group. So when they are finally re-united with the group, forgiven, there is a tremendous emotional experience, and something like that happens, I think, in the case of those 'initiations', single inverted commas, where that sort of technique has been semi-consciously employed. You are alienated so that you can experience the emotional exaltation of being received back.

Some tribes, some primitive tribes, I believe, employ this technique. The young boy is sent away from the tribe, and kept at a distance with stones for a while, and so, of course, when he is finally allowed back after three or four weeks, there is this tremendous experience - it's a sort of initiation.

All right, go on to four.

(4) Keeness of intellect and unwavering faith are required to tune in with the mind of the spiritual preceptor.

S: I think, personally, that here the emphasis should be on tuning in with whomsoever it happens to be. Let's first of all talk about 'tuning in' in the sense of being really in communication with someone more or less on your own level. I think before communication begins, there should be no assumption of inferiority or superiority on anybody's part - you see what I mean? When two people are parties to a communication, it should not be assumed by either that one is superior and the other inferior, in respect of their communication at least. They should be quite open-minded about the possibility of superiority or inferiority, if they think in those terms at all. But the communication should not start from the established position that one is inferior, in a certain respect at least, and the other superior - you see what I mean? - there must be that sort of openness, and then, I think, communication will take place, and as the communication deepens, as I said before, one person may well be feeling that he is in fact receiving, and receiving, and that he is not in fact giving - not in a position to give, say, - but he is in a position to receive and then perhaps he can realise or recognise that the other person is in the position, with regard to him, of being a spiritual friend, at least on that occasion and to that extent and for that purpose. That doesn't exclude a possible reversal of roles on some other occasion.

Mangala: Presumably one person has to feel that he's giving rather than receiving.

S: Yes, but again it would not be felt in an egoistic sort of way otherwise that would block the communication at once. You cannot grade everybody in terms of a static hierarchy because they're changing all the time. Sometimes one may overtake another or one may have their ups and downs. So you may be experiencing an 'up' when someone else is experiencing a 'down'. On that occasion you can help them. On some other occasion, when you're experiencing a 'down' and the other person is experiencing an 'up', they may help you. So the roles or even assumptions, they're not fixed, they're not static. Unless someone becomes a Stream-entrant then he is, as it were, constantly superior - to use that term - in relation to all those who are not Stream-entrants. He will never be in a position of not being a spiritual friend to them - until such time as they become Stream-entrants.

So there is a difference perhaps between what we might call horizontal communication and vertical communication. So far we've been talking only about horizontal communication - you assume to begin with that communication is going to be horizontal, but as the communication deepens it can, it may, become vertical communication, so for that to be possible, there must be on the part of the person who is, as it were, on the receiving end of the communication, there must be keenness of intellect and unwavering faith.

What do you think is meant by "keenness of intellect and unwavering faith" here.

Voice: Willingness to learn and willingness to believe.

S: Willingness to learn, willingness to receive perhaps rather than willingness to believe - an emotional openness and an intellectual openness, or an intellectual openness otherwise keenness of intellect, and emotional openness otherwise unwavering faith - not believing certain things about that particular person because you have been told. So intellectual and emotional openness are required in all communication, but especially, perhaps, as communication deepens from the horizontal to the vertical - then you require more openness - both intellectual and emotional then ever, because there is so much more to receive.

There is this general question of being in tune with the mind of not only the spiritual preceptor, but other people - this is very important, isn't it? - this being in tune with others - in tune with the people that you're working with, in tune with the other people in the community - the other people in the co-op, the other people at the centre - this implies sensitivity and awareness and openness. This being in tune, all of you in tune with one another, is very very important.

Mangala: It's occurred to me, Bhante, that you've really expressed (words unclear) the precepts like that, a religious preceptor as guru and then the spiritual preceptor. I don't know if there's meant to be any great difference in them.

S: I'm not sure about that. There could be an actual difference. There are differences in Sanskrit - the Acharya, there's the Acharya as well as the guru. But they seem to sort of cover much the same ground. (Pause)

So, being a good friend cannot really be a sort of official position. It cannot be anything that is insisted upon or anything that you insist should be recognised by others. It is something that emerges naturally and spontaneously in the course of your communication.

Padmaraja: As to the extent you see that personal guru as a guru or as an authority figure - to that extent you're not really going to be open to him.

S: No. No, you're not.

Padmaraja: You won't see him as a friend - as a human being.

S: Well, I dare say that you have to see the guru as a friend. That is almost going to the other extreme. But as you approach someone initially, it is more positive to approach them as another human being to whom you are willing to be open. If there is in that other person a greater depth than there is in you, that will be manifest in the course of your communication as the communication deepens. The other person doesn't have to claim that he is spiritually superior to you or insist that you regard him as spiritually superior to you. He may have that reputation, he may be the leader but he cannot be a guru for you unless you personally, in the course of communication, experience the fact that you are receiving more from him than he, apparently, is receiving from you. (Pause).

Padmaraja: One of the things to develop is friendship or openness towards another person or to see someone, to come to relate to somebody as a spiritual friend (words unclear).

S: I wouldn't like to say that. In some ways it's more difficult indeed because there are so many people occupying as it were official positions of being the guru or it's like bishops in England. I mean, notoriously people find it very difficult to treat clergymen as ordinary human beings, don't they? You get that sort of thing happening in the East with people who are, as it were, officially gurus. But there is a difference between being open and open to someone because you have a genuine personal experience of the fact that you're able to learn from him. There's a difference between that and adopting an attitude of sort of respect towards somebody because he is regarded as being a sort of important figure spiritually or religiously or ecclesiastically - that is not openness - according him the position which society, including religious society, has conventionally given. Your granting him all that sort of recognition or respect does not amount in itself to spiritual receptivity. You're recognising that someone is prominent within the group - that's all that you're doing. Whether he's spiritually superior so far as you're concerned you can really only know within the context of your own personal communication. If you are receptive, intellectually and emotionally.

You may not be able to find it out. In fact, you may not be sufficiently open - or the opportunity may not arise. But nobody can be, as it were, officially recognised by the society, by the group as a guru. A guru so far as society is concerned, so far as the positive group is concerned even, is invisible. He doesn't exist. He cannot be perceived. You see what I mean? You can be a pope or a bishop or an abbot but you cannot be a guru officially. Being a guru is not an official position, which confers any status within the group which can be recognised. Of course, to make things more confusing, one and the same person may in fact be a guru but also have a position within the group, including a religious group but the two actually have to be distinguished and, if that is the case, you will know, as it were, on which wavelength to operate. The Zen masters are very often of this kind. Yes, all right the Zen master may be the abbot so all right yes, when you meet him as abbot he'll probably expect you to bow down and so on, because that's the custom, but when he meets you in his private room for a spiritual exchange, as it's said, no holds are barred, you can say anything you like, you can be as rude as you like - if you're prepared to expose yourself to his possible comeback. He is not the abbot in his private room when he gives you a private spiritual interview. If you meet him in the reception hall sitting on his throne he is the abbot then and you treat him accordingly, but neither of you confuse the two functions and the two positions. He certainly doesn't - so that possibility is also there. (Pause.)

Manjuvajra: The recording's not very good actually. It was okay to start off with. (Discussion about the taping of the seminar)

S: We'll just have to carry on. Perhaps we should speak up a bit. Precept five. Who would

like to read that?

[Transcriber's Note: As referred to in the extract above the tape recorder for this session was not recording properly. The sound is very distorted and hard to decipher at times. Therefore the following, and previous, sections contains more references to words being unclear than usually is the case]

(5) Unceasing watchfulness and mental alertness graced with humility are required to keep the body, speech and mind unsullied by evil.

S: The body, speech and mind, of course, means the whole personality, the whole psychophysical being. The important point here is this concept of "unsullied by evil". What do you think is meant by this, this being "unsullied by evil", this being in a way pure? How important is this - this concept of purity and what exactly does it mean? In what way does unceasing watchfulness and mental alertness graced with humility contribute to it? I mean, you can imagine that unceasing watchfulness and mental alertness are necessary if one assumes, or takes for granted, that whatever evil sullies the mind or (word unclear) comes from outside. You have to sort of when you guard the doors of the sense. But in what meaningful way can you think in terms of keeping body, speech and mind unsullied by evil? How do you keep the mind unsullied by evil? Is one thinking in terms of the ten kusala dharma for instance? Presumably one keeps the mind unsullied by excluding all unskillful thoughts. Unskillful thoughts being conceived of as something external, and one keeps the speech unsullied presumably by avoiding wrong forms of speech, and one keeps the body unsullied by avoiding wrong actions. So clearly unceasing watchfulness and mental alertness are necessary for this.

"Graced with humility" - why do you think they should be graced with humility? What does that mean? - not taking this word humility too literally because I've sometimes said that humility is not exactly a Buddhist virtue - not humility in a Christian sense.

Manjuvajra: There's a sort of pride that says that it's not really that evil.

S: Well it's also that if you just sort of congratulate yourself on having kept the evil out, the evil has got in. Do you see what I mean? This is why perhaps humility is necessary - it's that abstention from attributing to yourself as a virtue, in an egoistic sense, the fact that you have kept out evil - not being too conscious - not to say self-conscious - of yourself as good or pure. In other words as Nietzsche said you don't make of your virtue a whip to beat other people with.

Mangala: It sounds as if one should sort of acknowledge that one has been (words unclear).

S: Well, yes, acknowledge in a sort of non-egoistic way if you possibly can do that. You don't need to depreciate yourself in order to make sure of humility. Humility doesn't mean a deliberate, even dishonest, depreciation of oneself just to make quite sure that you don't become proud. You should be, as it were, more confident, more sure of yourself than that. You should acknowledge objectively and (word unclear) the good that you've done or the degree of purity that you've attained without bothering about it too much just as you know how tall you are, or how heavy you are, what you weigh.

But what about this whole idea or ideal of keeping yourself unsullied by evil, keeping yourself pure? This is not a very popular ideal nowadays, is it? One doesn't think in terms of maintaining one's purity. In the Victorian period this expression was much used, (word unclear) - the pure woman, the pure young man, or even, later on, the pure-minded young man. But nowadays, if you were to tell a young man that he was a pure-minded young man,

he probably wouldn't take it as a compliment. So is there something positive here? Is purity a positive ideal? Have we gone too far in the opposite direction, by way of a reaction against the Victorians? - a reaction which has perhaps become a bit out of date now.

Manjuvajra: I feel that their idea of purity was probably a bit suspect anyway ...(words unclear) conventionally good, rather than purity, because I think that keeping yourself pure is keeping yourself feeling pure, more than sort of being pure.

S: If you are pure, you'll feel pure. Are you saying that you can feel pure, without necessarily being pure?

Manjuvajra: Oh no, but that (words unclear) - that's feeling pure.

S: Rather than being pure? Is not feeling pure, being pure? Being pure, feeling pure?

Manjuvajra: But I think the Victorians had ideas and Victorian attitudes and sort of ideals of being pure like, someone who was pure would be someone who was good (words unclear).

S: But don't underestimate the pure young man. He might have been pure and felt pure. I think there is a lot of positivity in the Victorian ideal that we have tended to distort. One knows what they were at their worst, fair enough, but people then perhaps did (words unclear) genuinely pure, even if in a way that doesn't sort of appeal to us very much, without just being puritanical, just goody-goody. That's because they genuinely and sincerely strived for purity at that time, at least in some cases. That perhaps purity was a positive ideal, at least for some of them. That is a pity we've lost that sort of approach, I mean, among other approaches.

Manjuvajra: I can't see why we would have lost it, if it was really something real.

S: Oh, I think things that are real can be lost. In Buddhist terms, in the Theravada tradition, in later Theravada tradition, the Enlightenment is thought of as constituting the Great Wisdom, the Great Compassion, and the Great Purity. We find it relatively easy to think of Enlightenment in terms of the Great Wisdom, or even the Great Compassion - but the Great Purity? Perhaps it doesn't come to us quite so naturally to us at present.

Mangala: (words unclear).

S: Well, Wisdom and Compassion also have if you take them in a certain way. (Words unclear) over-intellectual.

Mangala: Perhaps they haven't been so abused in a similar way as purity has.

S: Perhaps they've been even more abused than we've yet become conscious of. We just go on using the words wisdom and compassion - wrongly perhaps - but we don't really understand what they mean as much as we think. (Words unclear).

Mangala: I remember you were saying once about Mary Whitehouse, she was saying about the lack of morals and ethics in the country, and so on, and you said that, in a way, she had a point, in a way that there is (words unclear). It's not that she (words unclear) with the answers, but at the same time she did have a point, there was a lack of direction of ethical values.

S: Lack of ideals, lack of idealism. Have we not lost something, in that we no longer think, ever perhaps, of purity as an ideal?

Nagabodhi: The word seems to promote a kind of emasculation in the fashionable sense (words unclear) colourless, characterless, (words unclear) pure like pure sugar.

S: Pure alcohol, or pure water even?

Nagabodhi: Well, the is that more precise meaning of purity which is to say that it is exact in itself, if something really is itself -

S: Right, yes.

Nagabodhi: But for some reason the connotation of the purity means something less than yourself.

S: When you are pure, you've removed all extraneous elements. The defilements are said to be extraneous, in Pali. They come from are outside, which really suggests a very positive view of human nature, in a way, that purity consists in separating from yourself everything that is extraneous to you - really being yourself - this is what purity really means, being basically yourself.

Of course, there is the fact that the Victorians were a little bit obsessed with (word unclear) in some cases, with sexual purity. They tended to think of purity in exclusively sexual terms; no doubt there is such a thing as sexual purity, but purity doesn't only mean sexual purity. (Pause.)

And of course the Victorians took it for granted - this may not always be the case - that sexual purity meant abstaining from sex, you know it may not necessarily mean that, though we should be cautious about rejecting the possibility of that meaning, at least in some cases. You are not necessarily more yourself when you are involved with sex. You may be but on the other hand, you may not be.

Manjuvajra: That is the case, actually, with women (words unclear) virgins, they are more pure and more (words unclear). [Pause] When I think of the Victorians, the image that always springs to my mind is the fact that they put skirts on the pianos, because otherwise sexual purity (words unclear). I can't take that seriously.

S: Well, clearly some people found it possible to take that seriously. They found piano legs suggestive. (Laughter.)

Nagabodhi: Maybe, perhaps, that's not so absurd. When you think that there's a whole design of furniture (words unclear) it's something to do that you go into a house, and the way the carpet is and the furniture is, it's just shouting sex or sensual messages.

Mangala: That's an idea! No, I don't think I'm seriously suggesting -

Nagabodhi: What about your black silk duvet?! (Laughter.)

Mangala: Oops! (Laughter.) Oh, that was a gift.

Nagabodhi: Yes, but somebody made it.

S: In America there was this thing of Shaker furniture. Shaker furniture was well known - the Shakers being a Christian religious sect which was very ascetic - and Shaker furniture is now much prized. If you see pictures of Shaker furniture it really conveys something quite

austere. There is a sort of message which comes across of, as it were, simplicity, and austerity, and sincerity also. But this isn't the message that comes across from some of the let's say, French 18th century furniture, which is rounded, and elaborate and embroidered. You get a different sort of message altogether.

So, anyway, perhaps the Victorians had a point, who knows? Perhaps they were consistent at least, even though perhaps the (word unclear) were not quite correct.

Voice: In a way, that seems to be (words unclear) awareness of the influences of things. Nowadays, we tend to dismiss them (words unclear) and go into a room and we don't accept the influences of those things (words unclear).

S: Well, perhaps we can uplift ourselves through (words unclear) we accept that, but not that it can have the opposite effect, because we don't really take seriously the possibility of an opposite effect in that sort of sense. I mean 'bawdy' has become a term of praise as regards to literature. You can see books advertised as bold, naughty, and wicked, and bawdy as though well, those were terms of high praise. A really randy novel [Laughter] - that's meant to be a recommendation. So purity, the ideal of purity is not flourishing at least in literature.

Voice: (Words unclear).

S: Well, the Victorians would praise a book as 'not likely to bring a blush to the cheek of any young maiden'. Well, those were terms of high praise. Now the terms of high praise are 'a book which would certainly bring a blush to the most blase cheek'. (Laughter.) (Words unclear).

S: I can't think of any. Adult, mature, say they were adult and mature. Usually that just means infantile sex fantasies, adult. I think we have to reassess and possibly revalue this ideal of purity, as a spiritual ideal. We've really thrown away the baby with the bath water, in this case, 'we' meaning England, the West generally.

Mangala: I was thinking if anything else would do. Could we use anything else that doesn't have the connections, a different word that isn't so, that hasn't (words unclear).

S: I doubt if there is a word, really, of any literary value and emotional significance and -

Voice: (Words unclear).

Mangala: A Buddhist term really.

S: There should be, there should be -

Mangala: When you think, purity is a good Buddhist -

S: 'The Path of Purity' by Buddhagosa, visuddhimagga. It's an emphatic prefix, really it is *completely* pure. The Path of Absolute Purity.

Mangala: I was just comparing it to something like, in Buddhism, perhaps using the word unskilful rather than wrong. Perhaps there was an equivalent.

S: Well, some of our Friends have started suggesting that perhaps it isn't very skilful, really, to speak in terms of skilful and unskilful, instead of right and wrong. Some people say they find those terms a little alienating, skilful, unskilful, as though you can dissociate yourself somewhat from what you actually do, what is a skill, a knack - not anything that affects you

very deeply or that really expresses your character, whereas right and wrong express that.

Voice: (Words unclear).

S: Skilful and unskilful are a bit weak. Yes, they probably are. Right and wrong are -

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S: I think it was Jung who said that he thought the term 'evil' was, in fact, meaningful. It couldn't be adequately rendered as 'unskilful'. 'Unskilful' suggest just a mistake in method, as it were rather than in basic motivation. If you said, well, the Nazi concentration camps were unskilfully organised, it wasn't a very skilful operation, well it doesn't express the full sort of condemnation that the word 'evil' does, that they were evil things, not just unskilful. 'Unskilful' suggests, well, maybe the sanitation could have been better, or they could have been better organised etc. (laughter) (words unclear)..... unskilful sort of thing to do instead of killing people. It suggests, well, there was a sort of technical error, rather than something which was basically wrong.

Manjuvajra: You don't feel a technical error leads to (real) human suffering, whereas evil action does.

S: Yes, right.

Voice: (inaudible)

S: Well, papa is used, which is usually translated as 'evil'. In the Dhammapada it's usually papa -sabbapapassa akaranam, the cessation from the doing of all evil. Punya is also used to some extent, in the same way that we use the word 'good', but without the goody-goody connotations. But papa is definitely evil. Sometimes it's translated as 'sin'. It's certainly not sin in the Christian theological sense.

Mangala: Maybe it's quite valid to have a range of words (words unclear) talking about the (words unclear) campaign, hardly refer to them as being unskilful (words unclear), it's more than that. On the other hand, someone just slipped up somewhere (words unclear).

S: Say someone was rather influenced by particularly Christian moralistic conditioning and they had done something which they thought was a real sin, but it obviously was not. You would say, 'well, in Buddhism we simply call that unskilful action' - that would be an appropriate use of the word 'unskilful'. It wasn't a very clever sort of thing to do, but it wasn't a sin. It wasn't even evil. It was just unskilful - 'You should have been a bit more mindful' - that sort of thing.

Anyway let's close.

[Next Session [with a repaired tape recorder!!]

Right, we continue with the ten requirements. We did the first five yesterday afternoon. So we come on now to requirement six.

(6) Spiritual armour and strength of intellect are required for the fulfilment of one's heart's vows.

S: Well, there's several things that require discussion here. First of all, what is 'spiritual armour'? And then again what exactly is meant by 'strength of intellect'? And what are one's

heart's vows? Or what are vows? What is the nature of a vow generally? Perhaps we'll deal with the 'heart's vows'. This seems to be a somewhat idiomatic, or, perhaps I should say, literary translation of the Tibetan. But what does one think is meant by 'one's heart's vows' as distinct from simply saying 'one's vows'? Why one's heart's vows? What does that suggest or imply?

Kamalasila: That from which one's vows come, your commitment.

S: Yes, right.

Kamalasila: Out of which you make vows.

Mangala: Something very strong, very deep, sort of most really centrally important to you. It's not just like something you take very casually. Something very deep; it's part of you.

S: There is the possibility that 'heart' here translates 'citta', which is sometimes in Tibetan writings used instead of the full 'Bodhicitta'. One speaks of the citta meaning, in fact, the Bodhicitta. So that would be that deepest part of oneself, in the, what shall I say, the most advanced sense. Because if one did, in fact, take the Bodhisattva vow, what could be deeper in oneself than that vow? So if one takes it, as it were, technically, one could look at it as being the Bodhicitta. But in any case, even if one doesn't take it in that sense, if one is not a Bodhisattva, has not taken the Bodhisattva vow, it none the less means that deepest and most central and authentic part of one's self from which any vow that one may make issues, that part of one's self out of which any vow that one may make is an expression. So the expression 'one's heart's vows' suggests that vows are not something lightly or easily or superficially made. They do spring from a very deep, in fact from the deepest, part of oneself, from one's most genuine and as I said, authentic part, which in the case of the Bodhisattva, or would-be Bodhisattva, is the Bodhicitta itself.

So that tells us quite a lot about vows, doesn't it? What sort of thing do you think might be covered by vows? We have discussed this subject before but perhaps we could discuss it afresh from a slightly different point of view. Or perhaps we could go back a little. How did the whole question of vows arise within the FWBO, especially within the Order? Does anyone know? Does anyone remember? What is a vow, from this point of view? I was under the impression that everyone was quite familiar with vows, but perhaps it isn't so.

Kamalasila: Is it when you are making a decision to do something, either stop doing something, or start doing something, that you need to do, and you want to put the power of your commitment behind doing that?

S: Yes, yes. This is broadly what it is, though it doesn't quite give the context. Your commitment is expressed by your going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Then, of course, come the five precepts as we call them, the 10 silas. So what do they represent? You see, if the Going for Refuge represents say, commitment, what do the ten silas represent?

Kamalasila: Implementation. Putting that into practice.

S: In what particular form, or what particular way would you say? Well, by way of the implementation of certain, in fact ten, broad ethical principles. One of the points that we have made from the beginning, I think, is that the Precepts don't constitute rules that can be even rigidly or unimaginatively applied. They are principles, which means that they are just that. They don't automatically cover all possible exigencies of behaviour. They give you a general principle in the light of which you must shape your behaviour. In a sense they are so

broad that in many specific situations, in themselves, by themselves, as formulated, they would give you no guidance at all. Some are as broad as that. Especially for instance, well, let us say the First Precept: Abstention from - well, what is panatipata? Literally, harming living beings. Now that is incredibly broad, isn't it? So it is a principle, it is not a sort of code of rules which has been drawn up, though at various times in Buddhist history there have been various attempts to reduce all the principles to systematic codes of laws which will provide for, which will cover, all possible exigencies of conduct, which will deal with all conceivable cases of conscience, so to speak. In the West, this science is known as the science of casuistry, this is the technical term for it, in a non-pejorative sense. The Theravadins have gone in for this more in the history of Buddhist thought. The Mahayanists have not. The Vajrayanists least of all, for obvious reasons.

So the ten precepts really embody ten very broad ethical principles and as a result of your commitment, your commitment to the Three Jewels, your commitment to the course of your own spiritual development, your own higher evolution, you undertake to put these ten principles into operation in your life, as a foundation for your spiritual endeavour and spiritual development.

But the Precepts themselves do not necessarily tell you, in fact usually they do not tell you, how you should behave in any given set of circumstances. Even in certain circumstances, a number of precepts may call to be applied, and they may sometimes be in conflict, or seem to be in conflict. The demands of one precept or one principle may conflict or seem to conflict with the demands of another, and then you are in a bit of quandary. But anyway, that is a little bit by the way. So you see where the precepts come in. They embody broad ethical principles. So these broad ethical principles are the same for everybody, that is, every committed person does his or her best to embody those ethical principles in action, does his or her best not to cause harm to living beings, not to appropriate what is not actually given, etc, etc. But in the course of your individual spiritual life, that isn't quite enough. You may discover that you need to apply a particular ethical principle in a particular way, in a particular given situation, because you need either to develop or cultivate something in that respect or to get rid of something in that respect, so that situation you cover by making a vow.

For instance, let's try to find a good example. I was thinking initially of the habit of smoking. That is smoking tobacco, smoking cigarettes or cigars. All right, none of the precepts explicitly covers this. You see what I mean? They are much too broad, much too general. But anyway, on reflection, you come to the conclusion that smoking tobacco, the habit of smoking tobacco, is not in accordance with the requirements of your spiritual life and spiritual development, so you decide to give it up. Perhaps you link it with a particular principle or look on it as constituting an application within specific circumstances of a particular principle. Do you think there is a particular principle involved here or one with which this could be connected?

Manjuvajra: The fifth of the Five.

S: The fifth of the five, it could be.

_____: Or the First.

S: Yes, or the First, because you could regard the habit of smoking as spreading pollution, polluting the environment, especially your immediate environment, or doing harm to yourself, because you might develop lung cancer and so on, and also to other people by setting them a bad example, by following which they could do harm to themselves. So you could link it up with one or another of the principles, and regard it as constituting a specific application, or an application within a specific set of circumstances, or to a specific issue, of

that particular principle. But in any case you make a vow. So a vow represents a solemn promise, one might say, to do or to not do something, the doing of which, or the not doing of which, you have decided is inimical to your spiritual development. So the observance of the ten precepts or principles is supplemented by the observance of vows. The Ten Precepts or the ten ethical principles represent very general, let us say, standards of behaviour, which are common to all committed persons, but the vows represent their own individual ways of dealing with the specific requirements of their own individual life situations, as they try to develop, in accordance with their individual temperament, weaknesses, strengths and so on.

So you have the Going for Refuge, the commitment, you have the Ten Precepts which you are trying to apply in a very broad and general way, all of you equally, and then each person makes from time to time, vows to cover individual areas with which he wishes to deal. And of course vows can change. That's another important point. You can take say a vow for a month or for 3 months, or you can take it for a year and you can change your vows from time to time. At one time you may be observing two or three. At another time none at all. You may not see any need. At another time you may have ten or twelve different vows. And of course usually in order to make the vow more solemn and more binding upon yourself, you take it publicly. If you are an Order member within the context of the Order, or if you are not an Order member, at least on the occasion of a puja or something of that sort - your community puja perhaps - and in the presence of at least some Order members. So the fact that you have, as it were, made a public promise strengthens your determination to keep your vow, because you wouldn't like to disappoint your spiritual friends.

So do you see the connection of the vow now? So in the case of the FWBO, you may say, the vow arises. It is one's heart's vow, not in the sense that it springs from the citta, in the sense of Bodhicitta, because that might not yet have been experienced, but in the sense that it is the outcome of, the expression of even, your commitment to, the Three Jewels, your commitment to your own spiritual development. It may be also immediately, so to speak, the expression of one or another of the ten principles, which are in turn an expression of your commitment, your Going for Refuge.

So you can see now the place of vows in the spiritual life. You need something specific but you don't need something rigid and inflexible. It's not possible, say under the heading of each of the Precepts, to draw up a long list of do's and don'ts, which can cover all conceivable situations, by complying with which, you can be sure of observing that precept. As I have said, this tends to be the Theravadin approach, but it doesn't really work. And it can, at worst, encourage hypocrisy and self deception, and so on, and the observance of the letter of the law, while breaking the spirit. I mean, we were talking yesterday in this study group, about ownership and the ownership of money. Was it this study group? Yes, good. Well, there is a rule in the Vinaya which represents an elaboration of the ten principles, the Ten Precepts, for the benefit of, or as an aid to, those who are living what we may call the monastic life. There's a rule there about the non-handling of gold and silver. One of the rules is that the monks should not handle gold and silver. So some monks take this quite literally. They must not actually handle, that is to say, touch with their own fingers or hold with their own fingers, either the metal gold or the metal silver. But they may operate a personal bank account, or handle paper currency or leather currency, which is not mentioned in the Vinaya. So you see the sort of thing that one has in mind? And they will declare with perfectly straight faces, and presumably clear consciences, that they are not breaking the precept. Well, very technically they are not, but they are certainly not acting in accordance with the spirit of it, if they are under the impression that are thereby not possessing money as their private property.

So this is the sort of thing that happens when you try to give expression to the principle or the precept in the form of a set of watertight rules, the observance of which, not to say the obeying of which, will guarantee, ipso facto, your practice of that particular precept or

principle. One mustn't go to the other extreme - you do need rough guidelines, but they are only rough guidelines and sometimes they can change in accordance with changing circumstances.

But anyway, to come back to one's heart's vows, the taking or making of a vow is clearly a very serious matter. Leaving aside the vow which is an expression of the citta, the Bodhicitta, the vow which is an expression either of one's determination to apply a particular principle, a particular precept, in a given situation, in a particular way, or an expression of one's overall spiritual commitment, is something which should be made only very, very seriously, and with a full sense of its importance, and then really kept. I mean, I have been hearing in the course of the last year of people taking vows and then breaking them. There seem to have been two or three instances of that sort, which is rather unfortunate. So, I don't want to sort of scare people off making vows because they'll be so afraid of what might happen if they break them. One needs to follow a middle path here, but only take when one is really serious about taking and absolutely determined to keep at all costs. But a vow can be a very great help. Over the last year it seems there hasn't been quite so much concern with vows within the Movement, I get the impression as there was during the previous year.

[End of side one side two]

Is that because most people are just quietly carrying on observing them, or was it even to a slight extent a sort of fashion to take a vow the year before last?

Manjuvajra: They're not talked about even very much.

S: Are people actually taking them? Because if they take them, it must be known, because they are taken as it were publicly.

Voice: I can't remember having seen anyone take them for ages.

S: That's quite interesting. Any ideas why this might be?

Devaraja: There was a discussion on an Order day about vows being taken and broken. It was felt that there were two categories of commitment to a particular course of action, of behaviour, and it was felt that most behaviour could probably be just covered by a personal resolution. Suppose you wanted to give up cigarettes. Most people, if they just said, "well, I'm really going to make an effort to give up cigarettes, and I'm telling you so that I'm telling everybody", they could give it up with that, but vows should be kept for something that was really very important. Do people remember that?

Manjuvajra: Yes, I remember it.

Devaraja: On the basis that it was decided that most things could be covered just by a personal resolution.

S: Oh, but the question arises, what does one mean by important?

Devaraja: Behaviour which one had tried several times to change. Maybe had consistently resolved to give up cigarettes, but were unable to, and in that case something really strong like a vow...

S: A vow should be regarded as a sort of last resort, as it were.

Devaraja: Yes, strong medicine.

S: You don't think that there was an element of people being a bit afraid of breaking a vow? In other words not having sufficient confidence in their ability to keep it?

Devaraja: Yes, probably.

Manjuvajra: What I think happened - I remember that discussion, and I think the vow got a bit over mystified on that particular occasion. It was as though a lot of emphasis was placed on the fact that a vow should come from one's deepest commitment and the point was made that most people are not actually in contact with their deepest commitment most of the time, so in fact they're not in any position to make any vow.

S: Yes, I think this might have arisen out of the fact that several people have broken vows.

Manjuvajra: I've just taken another vow not to smoke for another two years.

S: Ah, good. I won't offer you any cigarettes then.

Manjuvajra: But, I've just finished a year's vow. Then I started smoking again and I said to somebody else that I'm going to take another vow and that person said to me, "Oh, why don't you do it out of your own strength? Why do you have to resort to a vow?" And I must say that person saying that to me did knock me off a bit. It made me ...

S: It seems a very odd thing to have said, because, as if to say well, the strength of the vow is surely your own strength, the strength of you at your best and deepest. It's not an adventitious aid. Perhaps they were thinking in terms of the witness aspect, when you call upon say other members of the Order to witness and it is more or less almost your sense of shame, not to say, guilt that keeps your hand from straying towards a packet of cigarettes, not actually the strength of your vow. But then that would not be any fault of the vows. And it might be sometimes skilful to keep yourself away from something unskilful, with just the thought that you are disappointing your spiritual friends, and that would be a shameful thing for you to do, if you are lacking in the strength that is really able to make a vow. But certainly the strength with which you make a vow is your own strength in the very best sense. It's you at your best making that vow. You're just trying to live up to yourself as you are when you are at your best and see things most clearly and are most determined and most resolved.

So you kept your first vow for a whole year? Well, in that case you deserve to be congratulated.

Manjuvajra: I had one cigarette actually.

S: (laughs)

Manjuvajra: I confess it all. Actually it's interesting because I did start smoking again at the end of it and I quickly built up a quite heavy habit and I did try to stop but I just kept on smoking. But as soon as I took the vow I actually forgot about smoking. I still smoke the occasional cigar but not cigarettes and I just didn't buy any more.

S: Well, perhaps you should make a vow to smoke only very expensive cigars. Then you won't be able to have them very often. (laughter)

Manjuvajra: Unless you have a communal purse, of course! [Laughter]

S: So, all right, then it says - this maybe sheds a bit more light on the whole matter -

"Spiritual armour and strength of intellect are required for the fulfilment of one's heart's vows." What exactly is spiritual armour? Let's go into this and then see how it related to the fulfilment of one's heart's vows. Spiritual armour is a sort of technical term. It seems to be associated usually with the Perfection of Patience. Practising the Perfection of Patience is sometimes referred to as donning the spiritual armour, I suppose for obvious reasons. When you are wearing armour, the arrows and the spears of the enemy cannot touch you. So in the same way, when you are practising patience, the anger and hatred, even violence of others, can't affect you, at least not mentally, not subjectively, in the same sort of way that it might have done before. So in what way do you think patience and especially the Perfection of Patience helps one in the fulfilment of one's heart's vows?

Mangala: It keeps you sort of earthed and grounded, as it were, so you don't get carried away by temptation.

S: Yes.

Mangala: - like to sit in the pub and take advantage of the smoke and everyone around you smoking and if you can just be patient.

S: You just sit there like an old Vimalakirti. Might even pretend to puff on a cigarette but you would not actually be smoking it, or you never drink up your alcohol, you wouldn't actually be drinking it.

Mangala: Or also, if you've taken a vow not to be violent, or angry, or swear, people kind of provoke you, maybe not deliberately, but if you're in that sort of situation, you just have to be really cool, self possessed, patient.

S: Also, one must of course remember that the Perfection of Patience is a very, what shall I say, advanced state or quality even indeed, because in its full form it is the patient acceptance of the non-origination or non-arisingness of all dharmas. In other words it represents a degree of Insight or Wisdom. So there is a sort of suggestion that you need even wisdom, in the Transcendental sense, at least a glimpse of it, for the successful fulfilment of one's heart's vows. In other words unless there's some degree of transcendental attainment and experience, your vows are always liable to be broken. You can never be absolutely sure that you won't break a vow, unless there is some degree of, well, insight, vision, transcendental experience. You can always backslide as long as you are not at least a Stream Entrant.

And this links up with what follows about strength of intellect. "Spiritual armour and strength of intellect are required for the fulfilment of one's heart's vows." We must not take the word intellect here in its modern English meaning. Here it represents something much nobler than that, something more like the old, even medieval, usage of the word intellect, as that which is superior to reasoning. It's something more like direct spiritual insight or vision even. So, it's as though it's saying a high degree of spiritual receptivity, as represented by the spiritual armour, or by Perfection of Patience, and a high degree of vision and insight are required if one is really going to fulfil one's heart's vows. In other words a very deep genuine authentic commitment. Otherwise there is no stability in one's spiritual life, no regularity, no continuity, no cumulative effect, no fulfilment of vows.

Mangala: So, really it's only a, let's say, a somewhat spiritually developed person that could actually make a vow in the first place.

S: Yes. A vow suggests something total. In as much as a vow is an expression of you as a total person, you cannot break it. Because how could you break it? You could only break it if there was conflict within you - one part of you fighting against another part, so only one part

making the vow, and the other part, not having made the vow, fighting against the vow. But if the vow is an expression of you, as you are totally, and if you remain total, and totally committed, how can you possibly break the vow? But that is only possible if there is some Transcendental experience or attainment, to provide, or to constitute, as it were, the nucleus of your new personality, in a manner of speaking, your new individuality, or you as a new individual. Don't take that expression of core of course too literally. You probably wouldn't even know what I mean.

Owen?: Do you think you can develop integrity on anything other than the Transcendental vision?

S: I'm not sure what you mean by integrity.

Owen?: Well - individuality.

S: I prefer to sort of simply stay with what I said a minute ago. That unless there is a degree of insight, unless you are in technical terms say a Stream Entrant, there's always the possibility of falling back. It may be that the possibility is very, very slight indeed, because you may be very watchful, very mindful, very skilful. You may have surrounded yourself with the right, very positive, conditions. But there could always be an eruption from outside which shatters all your careful preparations and your mindfulness, and so on. There could be a change in the conditions under which you live, even a change in the society in which you live, a change in the world and you could fall back. You might suddenly be involved in a war which certainly couldn't provide you with ideal conditions, and you might backslide, do things that in other circumstances you never would have done. So, integrity, which does not have, as it were Transcendental foundation, is not and cannot be permanent. The point of no return is a point of no-return, which suggests that all the points up to that point of no return are points of possible return.

Padmaraja: You were saying a little bit earlier, wondering why people don't seem to be making vows. And I've just been thinking about that a bit. This ties up very much with something I'm feeling at the moment, where I think I can see, I'm not sure, a general lack of confidence in the Order. I was touching on this last Order day - that in a sense it seems very apparent, to me anyway, that the Order now needs to make another step forward, and it just isn't happening.

S: Now, you must be a bit careful here, because the Order exists in England, Scotland, Finland, India, New Zealand.

Padmaraja: Right, Order in Britain, as perceived on Order day mainly.

S: Which means, of course, that individuals need to make a step forward, at least certain individuals, because the Order is not a collective entity.

Padmaraja: Yes, right.

S: This is why I did question a few minutes earlier, whether the fact that people weren't making vows so much this last year, to the best of my knowledge, as they were doing the previous year, was the result of certain people having broken vows, and therefore people generally perhaps doubting their ability to keep a vow, in other words, not having sufficient confidence and this ties up with what you've said. But on the other hand, it does seem reasonable, also, that you use a vow as a sort of last resort. If a simple resolution can do the trick, well, that would seem to be all that is really called for.

Mangala: Isn't this in a way looking at vows in a very negative sense, like something you do as a last resort to give up smoking, but you said once that perhaps vows could be in a more positive light instead of saying "well, I'll take a vow and stop smoking", you might take a vow to do something helpful and useful.

S: Yes, I did mention that earlier, to do or not to do something. But I think perhaps people have looked at vows more in the negative sort of way.

Mangala: I think that's maybe what Padmaraja was saying. It indicates a certain sort of lack of vision of what the vows are really about, and how they can be used. It's not using vows in a creative way. It's become very much almost like a repressive mechanism, instead of a creative tool of practice.

S: A vow in a much broader sense, of course, is the seventh of the Paramitas, in the list of ten, Pranidhana, and that involves, among other things, the Bodhisattva's setting up of his Pure land, than which nothing could be more positive and creative and constructive. I think one or two people did take vows to raise certain sums of money, by a certain date, for certain purposes. But the whole concept of vow in the Mahayana goes very much with the Bodhisattva Ideal, with the figure of the Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is, of course, a very confident and heroic figure indeed. So if vows are lacking, it would suggest that confidence and heroism are lacking, which is more or less what you are saying perhaps.

Manjuvajra: We were talking a bit about that last night, and I think that a lot of individuals have got a, what's the word, they can only see what's going on - provincial attitude. Our vision, I think, needs to go much bigger somehow.

S: Yes. Someone wrote, I forget where it was, in an article I saw somewhere, it might have been in *Shabda*, that he's been around Norwich, Glasgow, etc - it wasn't me - and he made some reference, I think I'm right in saying, to provincial Buddhism or provincial FWBO's, you see what I mean? But then you could say that, in a way, London is also provincial, because it only sees London, very often or sometimes East London only sees East London and West London only sees West London.

_____: And sometimes one community only sees one community and another community only sees another.

S: I've constantly protested against generalisations based upon an experience on one very small and limited area, as when someone says 'well there aren't any women in the Movement.' Well, go to Helsinki, you'll see plenty there. Go to Auckland, you'll see plenty there, or to certain other places. But just because there weren't many women attending one particular centre, someone says there aren't many women in the FWBO. But it comes back to something we have been talking about quite a bit, in recent months, I think, that is inspiration. Inspiration and vision are the things that are really necessary. Vision being the more, as it were, intellectual aspect of the thing and inspiration the more emotional-cum-volitional. You can lose sight of that a bit if you get too bogged down in detail. Detail has to be attended to, we all know that, but, none the less, you mustn't get so much bogged down in the detail of what you are doing, that you lose sight of the purpose which the whole thing subserves.

One could say that, before one can speak of one's heart's vows, you've got to have a heart. It's as though lots of people don't have hearts. You know what I mean? Or at least their heart doesn't really function. It's some small weak organ that appears to be pumping water or some other such fluid, instead of blood, or at best milk. You sometimes feel like asking certain people, well, do you actually have blood in your veins? Or is it some sort of thin, watery, gruel-like fluid instead? Again it goes back to talking of the spiritual life in spiritual terms,

well, one needs to be a human being first. One needs to be a man first, one might say, and a lot of people don't seem to have reached that level of actual humanity, or of being men, what to speak of reaching the level of being spiritually committed individuals.

There is always the danger, always the temptation of settling down in a relatively comfy sort of situation. No wonder Socrates used to refer to himself as a gadfly. There's no nobler function than that of the gadfly, you could say, (chuckles) preventing people from sitting down and taking ease or even going to sleep. That's why it's related in one of the Sutras that when the Buddha passed away, some bikkhus were glad. They were saying, well, he was always saying "do this O Monks", "Don't do that O Monks", he was always getting at them and now that he was gone, they could live in peace.

But you can't sort of prod people into it. That isn't enough. It isn't enough to be just getting at them. Actually the Buddha never did that sort of thing. You have to sort of hold up the vision or remind them of the vision and help them to see the vision and encourage them to move in that direction. Once again, there's no question of a combination of stick and carrot. The vision is not a carrot. It's not a super carrot. It's something quite different. And inspiration is not a stick.

_____: So it's important to keep in touch with the vision yourself?

S: Indeed, yes. Otherwise you do indeed become the blind leading the blind. And this is why I was emphasising that chairmen, especially, need to keep in contact with the vision, and of course, unfortunately, chairmen are more likely than anybody else perhaps, to get bogged down in matters of detail just because their work does cover such a wide field, so they have to be all the more careful. Or those in any position of responsibility with a lot to do.

Padmaraja: They've also got to be prepared to make the next step for themselves.

S: That's right, yes, for themselves even if others won't follow them, take the next step, yes.

Padmaraja: I can remember at the Convention when Lokamitra stood up on the platform and gave that talk about India. It was like a door opening for the whole Order, another dimension coming into play, into the Order. I don't feel many people have gone through that door actually.

S: Well, not everybody's even taken a look through the door yet, I think, but anyway it is beginning to happen. India is, I think becoming more real to people than it was. It's more definitely on the FWBO map now, instead of being Lokamitra's private eccentricity. Actually, quite a few people have been to India and passed through Poona now and more will be going out and passing through, in the course of the next year.

This is one of the reasons why I feel that it's not a bad thing, in fact it's a very good thing, for us to expand organisationally, even if it does stretch us, because if we are not stretched, we shall probably just settle down comfortably. I remember in this connection something that a friend of mind in Australia told me. Order members who have of course read their Shabdas will recollect that in one of my letters to Shabda, I spoke about my friends Rie and Sten in Sydney with whom I stayed. Sten being the presiding bishop of the Liberal Catholic church, which is an offshoot of Theosophy, mainly, Rie being his wife. So the Liberal Catholic church is pretty well established in Australia. As such sects go they've got quite a number of clergy. They've got several bishops and Sten himself who is the presiding bishop lives there. So his wife, as wives very often do, was letting a few cats out of the bag, you know? Of course she's not quite so much into the Liberal Catholic Church as her husband is. In fact she's much more strongly inclined towards Buddhism and always has been. Their son and

daughter in law are actually Buddhists. Anyway she told me one day when I asked her about the activities of the Liberal Catholic Church in Australia, she said that things were completely stagnant nowadays. This is where the wife lets the cat out of the bag, you see. She said nothing was happening. She said "things have been completely stagnant since all our churches paid off all their debts." She said it was working to pay off the debts that they'd incurred in building the churches, that really kept things going.

So I could really appreciate the truth of that, you know. Because it's as though one does settle down so easily. One does stagnate so easily. You need something to keep you going. And if the vision isn't able to do that, at least some practical exigency will, and that's better than nothing. So I think if we are kept stretched because we are expanding all the time, that's a good thing, because in any case the Dharma is being brought, the FWBO is being brought, to an increasing number of people. So don't expect that there will ever be a time when you won't be stretched, when things won't be difficult, and you'll just be able to settle down quietly and enjoy your own snug little niche in the FWBO. Even when you're old, even when you're 80, you won't be able to do that. You'll be sat peeling potatoes in the kitchen or something like that. You won't ever be allowed to be idle, because all the younger more active ones will be out doing something else. At least you'll be expected to sit by the telephone and take messages. (chuckles)

So expansion is really a very good thing. The minute a Centre is viable, start sending people out. Break up the viability, start taking people away and getting them to do other things elsewhere. But don't think you'll ever really have a minute's rest. It's so tempting, it's so ensnaring, the sort of settling down comfortably, somewhere where you've succeeded and got everything functioning nicely, you're not stretched. You're not really having to work hard any more. Everything is under control. Everything's efficiently functioning. You've no worries about money or anything like that. It's all ticking over nicely. That's the time to leave and start up something else.

There are lots of places that don't have FWBO's yet, even in Britain. You could even probably go so far as to say, a broad generalisation, if you are not being stretched, you probably aren't developing. I mean I'm not suggesting that people should go in for nervous breakdowns. That's going to the other extreme but keep yourself stretched, just nicely stretched, like the string on the lute, not so tight that no music comes forth at all or that you just snap. It's not that which is meant. But just stretched, not slack, not over relaxed, just comfortably sort of taut.

Padmaraja: You were talking about this parochial attitude, kind of small mindedness, but very often one gets almost that feeling from an Order meeting, that it is very parochial, whereas the image that sprang to my mind, I didn't think of it at the time but going to an Order meeting in London should be like attending court, kings and princes, it should be aristocratic, noble, uplifting. That's what I expect at least.

S: Because you're all coming from your different domains. Well, it should be more than kings and princes. It should be like all the Bodhisattvas arriving from the different Buddha worlds. Yes, it should be more like that (chuckles). And sort of circumambulating or dancing about the stupa.

Anyway, perhaps we should go on: "Spiritual armour and strength of intellect are required for fulfilment of one's heart's vows." Perhaps just before we finish with this precept, a few words, from a slightly different point of view, about strength of intellect. I have touched upon this before. But I think within the Movement generally, intellect - I don't mean in the sense of a narrow rationality or logic chopping attitude, is underestimated or is depreciated. We did touch upon this yesterday, didn't we? It was in this group or was it in the other one? It was in

the other one, then. But I think you know what I mean. I mentioned that people seem to expect their feelings to do the work of their thinking. Actually this was discussed more in the other group but I did mention it didn't I yesterday?

Derek: Did you not say that, in this context, intellect meant more aesthetic insight?

S: Yes, the modern English usage of the word intellect represents a debasement. Intellect in the middle ages did not mean just rationality. It meant the broader, more comprehensive, but still as it were, conceptually formulated, view of things. It was more like a philosophical understanding. And I think we tend rather to depreciate that. I think that's our legacy, as it were, from the hippy tradition, if you can use that expression, to play down thought, and exalt feeling or pseudo-feeling, at the expense of thought. I think this is less the case than it was formerly in the Movement. We've had some very thoughtful contributions to *Shabda*, for instance, showing that people are really thinking and thinking seriously. But it isn't enough just to feel, even though feeling is obviously very very necessary, in fact indispensable, but a strong, a powerful, even a passionate, feeling should not exclude forceful and clear and incisive thinking. The two must go along together, must ultimately be one and the same thing, thought imbued with passion, and passion imbued with thought.

I was thinking about this. I did suggest yesterday, I'm not quite sure in which group it was, that our preoccupation with feeling may be a reaction against the over scientific attitude of much in our environment. But on reflecting upon this, I wasn't quite so sure, because I was reflecting back to my own childhood. I remember, from the age of 8 to about 11 or 12, I was confined to bed, as I think most people know. And I was fortunately given by a neighbour a set of children's encyclopedias in 61 parts and I spent much of my time, not to say most of my time, reading these various numbers. I remember I was most interested by the articles and sections on the arts, especially painting and sculpture, on history, biography, literature, poetry, fiction. The only sections I skipped were the ones on scientific subjects. Now why? No one discouraged me from reading those sections. I had no previous experience of science subjects at school to put me off science subjects because I was only 8. On the other hand, I had no experience at school to encourage me to take an interest in, well say Italian painting or Greek sculpture, no. I had never heard of these things at school. It seems to have been entirely subjective. Do you see what I mean?

So it's as though it's deeply rooted in temperament, that you are either scientifically inclined or, as it were, artistically inclined. So, therefore, I think that the fact that in the FWBO, there is this emphasis on feeling rather than thinking, is not necessarily a reaction against anything in our environment. It may well be much more due to subjective and temperamental factors, which suggests that we need, really, to aim at a more balanced development of ourselves and develop the scientific and the artistic, let's say, the emotional and the intellectual, equally. We do seem to have far more arts persons around. It may be that, in a sense, the arts provide more of a link with spiritual life than do the sciences.

Some people outside the FWBO, some of our Buddhist friends outside the FWBO, disagree with that and have started up, or are starting up, a movement of scientific Buddhism. To me, that might be of course the limitations of my temperament, but to me that seems almost a contradiction in terms, if you see what I mean. Well, you could no more really speak about scientific Buddhism than you could of artistic Buddhism. Buddhism is Buddhism. Dharma is Dharma. Spiritual life is spiritual life. Though it can find expression in the arts, or perhaps in the sciences even, certainly in terms of philosophy.

So I think we shouldn't underestimate, shouldn't underrate the intellect. Let thinking also play its part and as I said again, I think in the other group, we shouldn't use the feelings as a refuge from thinking. Very often, people say, "Oh I feel this", or "I feel that," when they

should really be saying, "I think this." But if they say they think, then they can be challenged and they can be asked for reasons and evidence and proof. But if they say, I feel this, they keep it nicely subjective so it can't be challenged. It can't be questioned. Because perhaps they are afraid of the clash of argument. They are not so sure of themselves and they want to safeguard their position and not have to meet arguments and objections. So they express it all in terms of feeling. For instance, someone says "I don't really like him. I don't trust him. I feel that he's a thief." Well, how can you feel that someone is a thief? Because if you say he's a thief it means that he has actually committed an act of theft, overtly. So you must have grounds, you must have evidence, for thinking that. You can't say that you feel that he is a thief. So you can't expect someone to accept as valid your uncorroborated feeling. But this is what often people expect you to do. You are expected to accept their uncorroborated feeling.

But as soon as they say, well I think this, well, then they can be asked for proof. You say "I think he is a thief." All right, what makes you think that? Has he been prosecuted for theft? Has he been imprisoned for theft? If he has been, that information will be available, that evidence will be available. But if you just say you feel that he's a thief, obviously your feeling can't be questioned because it's a feeling, but then how can one take somebody's feeling that somebody is a thief as evidence that that person is a thief? But this is exactly what some people expect that you should do. You should take their feeling, their subjective feeling, as representing a sort of objective reason. So I think in all discussions, it's very important to keep feelings out of it, so to speak, not advance feelings as though they were arguments, which they are not. Your feelings have their place, but their place is not the place of argument.

Manjuvajra: In a discussion it might be valid to say "oh, I have this feeling about this particular subject" as long as you didn't expect other people to ...

S: Yes, that is simply a piece of information about you, not a piece of information about the subject. Except possibly to someone who knows you very well, and who can sort of read between the lines, and who knows, perhaps from experience, that your feeling is trustworthy, amounts to a sort of intuition, but that would depend very much upon their knowledge of you. You couldn't expect a miscellaneous group of people to accept your unsupported feeling as constituting some sort of testimony, objectively speaking. I think this is one of the great micchaditthis even within the Movement.

On the other hand, you could say that sometimes we use thought where we should be using emotion. Suppose you say, "I think he's a nice chap". Well, you shouldn't be saying that. You should be saying, "Well, I really like him". You are afraid to express it in direct emotional terms. You express it indirectly in terms of thought, or opinion, instead of giving expression to your own actual feeling or emotion.

Nagabodhi: Sometimes if you are not confident in your feelings or until you're confident in your feelings, it is quite hard to think. It's almost as if real thought draws, in fact, from feelings, an articulation of feeling, and if you can't really feel, you can't really think.

S: Yes, right. You find all the great thinkers in western philosophy are very full-blooded people, and their thinking is full of life and feeling and emotion, people like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Hegel, Plato.

Kamalasila: Isn't that more the sense of intellect in that older sense. Intellect it is more in touch with its feelings?

S: Perhaps, that is so.

Kamalasila: It's a combination. I think you said that somewhere.

Padmaraja: Maybe that's why you found it really difficult to read the scientific chapter in that book, because it was just thought divorced from feeling.

S: It might have been, but somehow I think it was more than that. I didn't even try to read them. (laughs) I mean, maybe a few bits and pieces. Astronomy, yes. I read something of the articles on astronomy. I was interested in the planets and stars. I know vaguely about those things even now, planets and stars and all the rest of it (laughs), if you see what I mean. But no, the scientific experiments I didn't find in the least interesting. I didn't even attempt to read about them but in the case of some boys, that would have been the first thing that they turned to - how something works. I wasn't interested in how the internal combustion engine worked, but there were diagrams of the whole thing. I was very, well, completely non-interested.

Devaraja: It's my observation, I don't know how true it is, my experience of working with scientists and technicians and engineers and that kind of thing is that almost universally they are incredibly boring people and they've usually got no feeling for visual things, they dress incredibly badly, and I don't think it's just subjectively my preference. You've probably got experience of this working the BBC but almost all the video technicians are incredibly dull, boring people.

S: Well, I did read somewhere - I think I've got it correctly, though I might not have it quite verbally correctly, that someone once said that if you meet a successful scientist, he will be an incredibly boring person, but if you meet an unsuccessful artist, he's an incredibly interesting person. (laughs)

Padmaraja: There is a saying in the BBC that a good technician is a dead one. (laughter) Whatever you make of that statement!

S: Well, what a light it throws on the BBC!

Mangala: I know several boring unsuccessful artists as well.

S: Yes, well, then it depends what you mean by an unsuccessful artist.

Padmaraja: Oh, you mean in the sense of unpopular?

[End of tape 3A tape 3B]

S: Well, no, I was thinking that an unsuccessful artist is not someone who's been to art school or art college, say, and knows about art and talks about art, but never actually produces anything. I think the idea is that someone who actually produces something, even though it isn't really successful, is still an interesting person by virtue of the fact that he has at least tried to be creative. But perhaps one could even question that.

Padmaraja: It's maybe a bit of a tangent, but this whole thing about the split of the arts and the sciences, it doesn't seem to have always been does it? Manjugosha's the patron of the arts and the sciences, so those things aren't seen as separate categories that (pauses)

S: Mm, Mm, But the sciences in modern times have been developed to an extraordinary extent and often are sort of dependent upon, say, mathematical calculations, which are completely remote from anyone's actual experience.

Nagabodhi: Is it not so much the growth of technology, because pure scientists, even pure mathematicians, actually do seem to be quite creative people. Jimmy's a PhD. mathematician is not the kind of drab tweed-suited technologist, you know (-).

S: I think it is more technology than science.

Manjuvajra: I think good mathematicians are frequently quite creative. They're very very difficult to talk to and usually very nervous and sort of shun company, I think because they spend so much time working by themselves, just sort of totally inside their heads. After a few years of that, they completely lose contact with other people so they often have really weird habits and twitches.

Mangala: Actually there was a guy who lived in Brighton a few months back who unfortunately committed suicide. He was a PhD mathematician in fact and he came along to the Centre a few times. He was a very nervous sort of person. He did the metta bhavana one night and he came to see me a few days later. He was really in a terrible state, because he'd just started contacting so much feeling that he didn't know what to do. It was like suddenly, normally he's a bit of a recluse and now he was talking to everybody, in quite a sort of manic way and just couldn't really handle it.

S: Does this not suggest that the sort of one sided development that is required by such disciplines is completely detrimental to the development of the human being, or even to the existence of the human being, as such? But society, our modern technologically-based society seems to demand that certain people devote themselves in this sort of way. Is that right livelihood even? So this raises really quite far reaching questions, doesn't it?

Devaraja: I think there's sort of certain levels. I've told some people the story before of when I was in Paris once. I met at the Theosophical Society somebody who was a theoretical physicist, I think in the most advanced branch of physics, and we went to his, he was going blind, and he had a secretary to do all his work to type out his work but we went and had coffee in a cafe afterwards and I found him really fascinating and warm and he gave me the very strong impression that it was like a spiritual discipline for him, theoretical physics, and that he actually through his studies, was achieving quite elevated states of mind.

Manjuvajra: I think that's possible with some, just a few people. Einstein was one. So was Dirac.

S: Schrodinger perhaps.

Manjuvajra: Schrodinger as well, yes. Dirac was on the radio the other day, and he gave exactly that impression as well. He was very warm. You had the feeling that quite a lot had happened to him in his life, but I think for the majority of people they never get to those levels. They stay very much on the purely rational level. I'm working at the moment with quite a few mathematicians and they are really, they're all crazy. They're really alienated people.

S: Reminds one of Blake's Spectre.

Nagabodhi: I suppose in the past science wasn't a professional field. It was a cruder science. There was more room for imagination, intuition and alchemy. That whole side of science has ...

S: Well, to the extent that it was a side of science. Anyway, let's go on to the next precept.

(7) *Habitual freedom from desire and attachment is necessary if one would be free from bondage.*

S: Well, that's pretty obvious. It's almost a truism, but perhaps we can extract some new meaning from it? There's one word here which I would say is an operative word. Which do you think that is?

Nagabodhi: Habitual.

S: Habitual, yes. Habitual freedom. Occasional freedom is not enough. Freedom must be habitual. Not that habitual is perhaps the best word, because it shouldn't be just the result of habit. I mean freedom cannot be the result of habit, so strictly speaking "habitual freedom" is a contradiction in terms but none the less, taking the spirit of that phrase, freedom which is constant, freedom which is unfailing, freedom which is never undone. So "desire and attachment". Well, clearly one should be free from attachment, but what about desire? This is a rather ambiguous word, isn't it?

Mangala: It's craving, I suppose.

S: It's craving, it's addiction. I hope quite a few of you have read that book on *Love and Addiction* which I was strongly recommending to all our Friends. Who has read it?

_____: I'm half way through. (Pause followed by laughter)

S: Press on! [Laughter] Well it's a book I recommend. It's by an American. It's one of the few books that in a sense almost renews one's faith in human nature, in the sense that somebody in the States, involved with psychotherapy, having no connection with the FWBO, no connection with Buddhism, can actually have seen so clearly those very things. That is really very encouraging. And spells it out so clearly, so consistently in a way that is useful even to people within the FWBO, especially his analysis of addictive relationships, the addictive society generally. So it's addictiveness that we are concerned with, not so much with desire. It has been pointed out, I think by Mrs Rhys Davids, that the word that we translate as "desire" in Pali is not always a dirty word. According to her, "desire" should really render the Pali 'chunda'. You've got 'kamachunda' for sensuous things but also you've got 'dhammachunda' which is desire for the dharma. 'Trsna' which is one of the links of the 12 fold chain should not be translated as "desire" but rather as "craving" or even as "addiction" or "addictedness".

Otherwise clever people who are new to Buddhism will say "Oh, Buddhism teaches that you should get rid of all desire. What about the desire for Nirvana. You see, your position is self contradictory." They think this is very clever. You should say that Buddhism is not concerned with the elimination of desire but with the elimination of craving and you should desire to eliminate craving. Without desire, there is no spiritual life.

Otherwise if you say Buddhism teaches the eradication of desire, people think that you mean that Buddhism recommends the attainment of a dead, dull state and it's anti-life, so to speak, when what it is against is craving, is addiction, is addictedness.

Devaraja: It seems really prevalent (words unclear) because there was an article in *the Guardian* recently, I don't know if you saw it, something about, is it Ayers?. He was saying quite a lot of people were saying that perhaps Buddhism would be the best thing for the West and he was saying personally his view is that though there were elements in Buddhism that were very good, he felt that its generally pessimistic view was unsatisfactory, and it's just extraordinary how many people have got this idea.

S: Yes, I heard about it. It's very basic - they seem to have really latched on to certain misunderstandings about Buddhism and sort of hang on to them, despite all the corrections that have been issued. It's as though, somewhere towards the end of the last century, it was firmly fixed in the minds of the great British public that Buddhism was negative, ascetic and pessimistic, and that its ultimate aim was annihilation or death. None of the subsequent literature has been able to correct this wrong impression.

Mangala: Do you think there's much difference actually between craving and addiction. The two are not exactly synonymous, are they?

S: Addiction is in a way a stronger word, I think, when you have become almost organically dependent upon something. There's a very strange case cited in this book. Apparently somebody in America had conducted experiments with people who were accustomed to watching TV. The experiment was that he took them away from their TV sets or took their TV sets away from them for a whole month and they all manifested withdrawal symptoms as when you are taken off a drug. So this is what is suggested, this is what is conveyed by addiction. It is not just craving for something but being accustomed to taking in something and becoming so dependant upon it, that when it is taken away from you, you manifest withdrawal symptoms. I could actually see that certain people when they went to India experienced mild withdrawal symptoms. Do you see what I mean? Because you become so accustomed to, dependent on, almost organically adapted to a certain environment or a certain set of circumstances or people or things that when they are no longer available, when they are no longer around, you do manifest withdrawal symptoms. And according to the author of this book, our current society, especially in America is an addictive society, a society which encourages addiction, which is based upon addiction and which is therefore a very unhealthy society. He, especially, of course, deals with the addictive relationship. Well, he starts with drugs. He goes on to relationships and ends up considering society in general, in a very interesting way.

Mangala: I suppose even 'spiritual practice', in inverted commas, could be a bit of an addiction.

S: Well, it would only then be technically a spiritual practice. Someone was telling me recently how the Hare Krishna people were always reciting their mantra. That would seem to be addictive judging by the description which I was given, the almost manic way in which they recite it. So habitual freedom from desire and attachment, or rather from craving and attachment is necessary if one would be free from bondage. And of course, we don't really know how strong our craving is, or how attached we are to certain things or how addicted we are to them, unless they are taken away from us, or we are taken away from them. Very often we just don't know. It's only a change in our circumstances, perhaps maybe a quite accidental change just makes us aware of how dependent and how addicted we are. This is one of the reasons why it's really good to go and live in a foreign country for a while. If you go, say, to the continent, or even if you go to India, you can't get exactly the kind of tea that you were accustomed to. This can be mildly irritating. If you are addicted, well of course it's much worse.

So it's true that one should envisage and one should present, the spiritual life in predominantly positive terms, but one cannot neglect, one cannot overlook, the, as it were, negative side altogether. One has to speak at least to some extent in terms of freedom from attachment and freedom from addiction. One mustn't let people off the hook too lightly. There are certain things that need to be given up or that one needs to become free from.

Manjuvajra: As you've expressed it, that seems quite positive anyway, saying "freedom

from". I mean it's like you're going to something better, not for something worse which is the normal sort of fear.

S: Or just to nothing. Well, the usual presentation of Buddhism is that Buddhism thinks that existence is so painful, is so full of suffering, that it is better not to exist at all, and Nirvana is that state of non-existence. What makes you suffer is your craving, so it's as though craving brings you into existence so that you can suffer, so if you want to get rid of suffering, you have to get rid of the craving that makes you suffer, and since existence is inherently suffering, you get rid of existence too. So you cancel yourself out. You're compelled to cancel yourself out, on account of the terrible torment of your existence, resulting in the peace, if you can call it peace, because there's no peace because no person to experience peace, of Nirvana, the blank annihilation of Nirvana. This is actually the current, the popular view of Buddhism. This is really what you are up against when you are talking to people about Buddhism. If people have heard about Buddhism at all, this is usually what they have heard. This is why if people come along not knowing anything about Buddhism, then the chances are that they'll be relatively open minded.

Mangala: This thing of rebirth that you're looking at in the other seminar - you can say it is of rebirth in terms of everyday psychological states, and the reactive mind, but what about on a more, let's say well, it's not even a metaphysical level but, you know, it seems to me that the idea is actually not to be reborn.

[On to tape four]

S: Well, this is, in a way, you can say, the view of the Theravada, but it's not the view even of the Theravada that you aim at not existing. It's not existing in a particular conditioned way, because the Theravada, or the Buddha in the Theravada, specifically rejects the view that when the cycle of births ceases then there is only non-existence; this is rejected as a one-sided view. Similarly, it is said that one should not aim at non-existence. This is vibhava trsna - the craving for non-existence, the craving for annihilation - which is one of the two extremes. But in the Mahayana it doesn't say that you should aspire not to be reborn, because the Bodhisattva doesn't mind being reborn if it's necessary, but in his case, he is not reborn due to personal craving, but motivated by compassion, and out of his desire to keep in contact with people, so that he may help them. So, in the Mahayana the possibility even of rebirth is not negated as a spiritual ideal.

Mangala: So in other words once we can exist on let's say a higher level than on the sort of, earthly, sort of, form, which wouldn't, in fact, negate rebirth. You could be reborn but it doesn't actually mean anything on the human level.

S: Well, yes. It doesn't necessary mean, in the context of the Mahayana, on account of your craving for continued personal existence. I think one has to be careful presenting Buddhism predominantly in Theravada terms, and speaking only of the cessation of the round of births. Perhaps one should bring in more positively the Bodhisattva Ideal, though taking care that that was not misunderstood.

That there is nothing wrong, as it were, with birth and death. It's the use that you make of them that counts. The Bodhisattva is not afraid of being reborn it is said.

Nagabodhi: Why is there this total misconception about Buddhism? Is it simply that there has been bad translation or is there, in fact, in the Theravada some root of that kind of thing?

S: (interrupting) There have been bad translations, but those have been replaced, to a great extent, by good translations. There have been misrepresentations of Buddhism in print, but

there have been excellent books giving a very true picture. It's as though first impressions are the most important, even in the case of a culture, it's a bit like that. Perhaps also some Theravadin Buddhists unintentionally feed the wrong impression by an unskilful presentation of Buddhism in the West.

Nagabodhi: I wonder also if there is not something in the western temperament, there is an actual hankering after the dark-

S: Mmm Mmm

Nagabodhi: and I think people have been attracted to Buddhism because it seems to offer this idea of cessation.

S: Well, it was certainly my experience, when I spent my two years at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, and was also in contact with people going along to the Buddhist Society, that some people were actually attracted by this travesty of Buddhism, which, so far as I was concerned, was simply not Buddhism. There were people who were definitely attracted by this. Maybe they were almost in the majority - yes - who were attracted by the negative side, well, not just the negative side of Buddhism, but Buddhism presented as an entirely negative teaching. I think I mentioned before, the case of the girl who came from Reading University, from the Buddhist Society there, which I used to go and talk to sometimes, she came on one of our very early retreats, and she told me a very interesting thing in the course of the retreat. She said that one of the things that had most attracted her to Buddhism was the Anatta doctrine (as meaning that there was no self, no soul, full stop). That instead of there being a soul, or where the soul was usually supposed to exist, there was just a blank, just a gap, just a hole, as it were. She said this is what had really attracted her to Buddhism. But, she said in the course of the retreat, she had realised that the reason why she was attracted to the Anatta doctrine, as interpreted, or to Buddhism as being the teaching of the Anatta doctrine, was that actually she hated herself. She realised this in the course of the retreat.

I think that this could be at the root of many people's attraction to that sort of Buddhism as presented in that sort of distorted way. Really these people were very strange, I remember them very well. They were attracted exclusively by the Theravada, and especially by the Vipassana teaching. They tended to go after this. They were intensely alienated people. Some would go into Zen also, some people of this sort. They were intensely alienated people, chronically alienated people, out of touch with their feelings especially. They inclined to a scientific view of Buddhism, or at least they were attracted by a scientific, or pseudo-scientific, terminology.

Manjuvajra: A sort of rationalist.

S: Yes, yes. They tend to see Buddhism as something purely rational. So this is what I call the spectre of Buddhism, in the Blakean sense. This is not Buddhism, it is the spectre of Buddhism. So, perhaps, this pseudo-Buddhism as we can call it, this spectre of Buddhism, does correspond to a certain neurotic need in some people, who thereby keep alive and who perpetuate that version, if you can call it that even, of Buddhism. And there are even monks coming from the East who, perhaps, largely unintentionally or unconsciously, also perpetuate, tend to perpetuate that particular version, because of their very one-sided negative presentation of Buddhism, which luckily, in their own country, is supplemented by all sorts of colourful festivals and ceremonies, which it cannot be supplemented in that way in this country, so you get the bare skeleton. In the East, you could say, the skeleton is decorated with a few flowers, but here, it's the skeleton naked and unadorned, and this is supposed to be Buddhism. You can hear the bones rattling.

Also such people are rather fond of the Abhidharma, considered or conceived in the same sort

of way, the very dry, analytical approach to Buddhism, and to yourself. But they all like this analytical reduction of oneself. They believe that Buddhism teaches a sort of reductionism which leaves just nothing in the end, you just disintegrate, everything disintegrates and there's nothing left. There's nothing for desire to hold on to. So everything is swallowed up, everything ceases to exist, and this is Nirvana. The language of the Pali Scriptures sometimes seems to suggest this, but not really so. There's always an implied positive background. But if people themselves are not positive enough to feel the presence of the implied positive background, they can only take such statements in a purely negative way. [Pause]

So "habitual freedom from desire and attachment" or "craving and attachment" - "is necessary if one would be free from bondage".

What do you think is meant by "bondage" here? Perhaps that's pretty obvious - All one's previous conditionings, especially habitual conditionings. Perhaps we ought to pause for tea or coffee now.

Devaraja: I had a date with my mother some days ago, we started a whole conversation (unclear) because that's a view that she had, she had got on to the idea that the aim of Buddhism was just to sort of merge with the universe.

S: Well, that's a slightly more positive way of putting it.

Devaraja: We had a really good conversation and it emerges out of that conversation that she, well for years, she's just completely rejected Christianity, but she's getting on now, so her thoughts are turning towards death, and I got the strong impression that she was really looking for something, particularly as a result of again, I think, been stimulated by a visit to the Centre and she said again how much she appreciated the atmosphere.

S: How old is she?

Devaraja: She's just sixty.

S: Oh, that's not very old.

Devaraja: But, I suggested to her, that, maybe, when a beginners retreat came along, perhaps she could come on it, and I felt that she was interested, but she lacked confidence, more confidence in her own abilities to get something out of it.

S: Or to get into something new.

Devaraja: Well, - no, I think she's open enough not to be limited by that, but I feel that perhaps that idea that was talked about some four or five years ago, about a sort of summer school situation-

S: Yes, more comfortable accommodation and all that, yes - well, we've been talking about it more recently. In fact it's planned for 1981.

Devaraja: Really?

S: Oh yes, Sona has been given the responsibility of finding a place, so you could perhaps tell her there will be something like this. That would be quite good, maybe a few more mothers and fathers might be interested in coming along.

Devaraja: What was refreshing and encouraging wasn't that, - I felt that her interest wasn't

just because she was my mother. I felt that there was genuinely something there. (Pause)

S: I remember the first time I went to the Biddolph Meditation Centre which was then run by the Hampstead Vihara. I went there when one of these vipassana courses was in progress, there were about thirty people there. They were absolutely like zombies, there is no other word for it. They really thought that this zombie-like state was something spiritual, it's incredible. Some people were having nervous breakdowns, and there were some people even being admitted to mental hospitals, but that seemed to attract people all the more, yes. It really did. They were sort of fascinated by this possibility of breakdown. Perhaps that was the nearest they could get to salvation, as it were, in a sense it was a good thing for them to breakdown, depending on the treatment that they got afterwards.

Manjuvajra: Do you think it was the individuals or the effect of their sort of bad Buddhism?

S: It was both, it was clearly both, and also the effect of the teachers. The teachers, I could see quite definitely, at least the two most important ones, were definitely people who enjoyed power over others. I could see them almost gloating over the effect which they could have on people, by inducing certain experiences and driving them up into a corner, and even bringing about a breakdown. They enjoyed doing all this. They didn't actually do the vipassana themselves, that was quite interesting, they manipulated the techniques. They were quite, in a sense, healthy people. They were in no danger of breakdowns.

Mangala: What actual techniques were used, do you know?

S: Well, simply stepping up the pressure, cutting down on people's hours of sleep, reducing them to about two hours a night, making them observe silence, not allowing them to talk or socialise, keeping them in their own individual rooms all the time, and only permitted to speak for a few minutes each day to the person taking the retreat. Simple.

Mangala: What sort of meditation techniques were they doing?

S: Ah. Usually the watching and counting. But I studied this, and I found they were doing it wrongly, according to me, or I could say according to the Buddhist tradition. Breaking it all up. In other words they practised awareness of the body. How they do it, they practice the awareness, say, the awareness of raising my hand. So they would practice like this: I am now about to raise my hand, I am going to raise my hand. This is due to the operation of the air element. I have now raised my hand. This was due to the operation of the air element. I shall raise my hand again. This will again be due to the operation of the air element. You see? In other words instead of being aware of the continuous flow of movement it was all broken up, so you were constantly checking your flow of movement and again this induces an alienated experience. This is how it was being done. You make, again in accordance with abhidharma philosophy, at least presented in a certain way, you reduce the single continuous flow of movement into a succession of discrete, broken up, movements. The idea being so you can study it better, but actually it breaks up the flow in such a way that a sort of irritation builds up, energy, there's a sort of constant blocking off of energy, and that accumulates and something happens, sooner or later. You may have a bit of a breakthrough, sometimes, but more often than not a sort of breakdown, or you just feel very alienated. Most of the people used to feel really awful after a few days, and then they'd be told "you are now experiencing the truth of dukkha" and that is insight, you're developing Insight and they'd believe this.

So they used to go around really suffering, in a very alienated state, but convinced that they'd developed insight and were maybe even entering the stream. You see how it works?

_____ : What happened to these people after they left?

S: I really don't know. Some were coming along to the centre. Some seemed to come along in this alienated state all the time. Some managed to hold down a job. Some of course were women, just living at home, or living on incomes, because they tended to be a little bit well off, people coming along to the Hampstead Vihara, in some cases at least, and they were, I think to begin with people very much cut off from their feelings, so they found a sort of confirmation of this, even a sort of philosophy of this. Feeling was absolutely out, metta bhavana was sort of just dismissed as absolute rubbish, just very inferior samatha stuff, nothing to do with vipassana. As for puja, puja was heresy! That was Mahayana heresy. Or chanting, that was absolutely out.

_____ : Did these people ever read any sutras or have any contact with.....

S: Oh yes, certain selected sutras, but mostly dealing with vipassana-like things which they could take in this very one-sided way. Little manuals of vipassana teaching they used to read. So this vipassana tradition does continue, but it has been diluted somewhat, and watered down, which is a good thing, and it seems to be doing less harm than before, and the different teachers of it do vary very much, some reasonably good and others really still quite...

Manjuvajra: In this country?

S: I'm not quite sure what the position is in this country. I'm thinking more of America and India. There is one in India going around - Goenka, an Indian. He seems not too bad but he also uses metta bhavana in combination with some of these vipassana techniques, and encourages people to go on retreat. So in a way, in Ahmedabad this has opened the way, as it were, for our retreats, because we've found quite a lot of people accustomed to going on retreats and being quite familiar with that sort of situation, which in a way, has helped us. And they had practised metta bhavana before, and they'd practised a kind of mindfulness so it wasn't very difficult for them to get into the FWBO way of practising meditation. They liked us more, because there was puja and chanting as well with us!

In a place like Maharashtra, in a place like Pune, they'd have nothing to do with Goenka, the Buddhist, just because he had been formerly a caste Hindu, they were strict on that, even though he was now a Buddhist and teaching vipassana, that doesn't cut any ice with them. They feel he's at heart still a caste Hindu. But in Ahmedabad and Gujarat generally they are not quite so strict as that. Quite a few non-Buddhists were going on his courses. We do get along to FWBO classes and functions in Ahmedabad a few non-Buddhists. One of our - I think it's one of our Order Members there, I forget, because there's so many now, is an ex-Brahmin, or he might be a mitra, but he might be the Order member actually, certainly someone quite involved.

_____ : And the others, the ex-untouchables don't mind?

S: Oh they accept that. It's easier in Ahmedabad, which is better. One of the things I was emphasising is that our Buddhist movement is not just going to be a Movement of ex-Mahars or ex-untouchables, but for anybody from any caste or any community who wants to commit himself to it.

Whether the FWBO in future should try to express the Dharma in still more positive terms, well this raises the sort of general question of how we should try to express the Dharma. I don't think we can have any preconceived ideas about it, even preconceived positive ideas. Because what you've got to do, what you are concerned with, eventually, is communicating the Dharma. So communication implies that you are in communication with certain other

people. So what you've got to is to get the Dharma across to these other people. So you have to do that by whatever means seems best, seems appropriate. Broadly speaking it would seem that a positive presentation communicates the Dharma better than a negative one. But even so, you have to be careful that you don't adopt the view that you must always present the Dharma in positive terms, and present it in positive terms regardless of the needs of the person to whom you are presenting it, or even unaware of them or of their needs. The first thing to do is to be aware of the person to whom you are trying to communicate the Dharma, to feel the presence of the Dharma, or the life of the Dharma within yourself, and to communicate it in the best and most effective way that you can. I think in the West that would usually involve presenting it in positive terms, but one shouldn't exclude the possibility of sometimes having to present it in certain respects in negative terms, if that seems to be the best way of communicating to that particular person. So what you are basically concerned with is communicating the Dharma, not with communicating it in any particular way, even though there are certain broad patterns, inasmuch as there are certain broad patterns of psychology and attitude, amongst the people that you encounter. You will encounter broad patterns of people - do you see what I mean?

You mustn't have the sort of preconceived idea that you must always be positive, or must always present it in positive terms. No, you have to see the person that you are trying to communicate it to, and communicate it accordingly, in the terms which are most relevant and most effective. But I think usually they would be actually positive terms. So don't try to be more positive, don't try to present it in more and more positive terms without actually seeing that the person to whom you are trying to communicate it will be more and more helped by your presenting in more and more positive terms.

A lot of the presentation of the Dharma in the Pali Canon is in negative terms. Clearly that was useful and helpful in those days. It doesn't seem so helpful or useful nowadays. In the Mahayana sutras the presentation is much more positive as we would say. That apparently was more useful at that time. When it comes to the Vajrayana, it's very positive indeed, almost more than positive.

Nagabodhi: When I've been teaching meditation at centres I've been experimenting with all sorts of different approaches, and I find that if I concentrate on the negative - I'll be explaining say the metta bhavana, and I'll talk therefore about hatred, resentment, negative emotions, and what a pain they are. If I take that tack, rather than selling - or communicating - metta, the positive, and spending more time on that, you tend to get people much more grabbed by the negative. They're kind of analyzing the shortcomings of themselves or society. But if you go too far there's suddenly a kind of deadness that descends on the situation.

S: Yes, right.

Nagabodhi: They are almost blocked by it. They just sort of say Oh yes, Oh!.

S: They're discouraged.

Nagabodhi: You've got to get it just right. But on the whole to actually work with negative ideas I find can actually engage people more existentially, I feel they are right there, they're really keen to do the practice if they've just been reminded a little.

S: Well, you are speaking of the emotionally negative, so to speak, whereas the full-blooded sort of pseudo-Theravadin approach is sort of ascetically negative, it negates even the good or the positive, what to speak of the actual negative just as 'vipassana' negates metta.

Manjuvajra: I sometimes find that even though you try to present things in a positive sense,

people still pick up on the negative approach even though you're really not talking....

I mean for example if you were talking very positively about living in communities and so on, they experience it as a negative - as if they're going to have to give up -

S: They feel threatened by the whole idea of, say, a spiritual community, so they don't see it as a positive thing, they see it as negating their particular attachments and addictions and so on, and that is of overwhelming importance to them. So they cannot see the Spiritual Community in any other terms except as destroying whatever they, in their own way value.

Derek: I don't understand what you were saying about vipassana negating metta, is that what you said?

S: Yes, I'm not speaking of real vipassana in the traditional sense, but of the so-called 'vipassana' meditation practice, which dismisses metta as no better than a defilement. That is to say, certain of these 'vipassana' or pseudo-vipassana teachers discount metta completely, and will only concentrate on this very analytical pseudo-vipassana approach. I'm not saying that real vipassana negates real metta - no it doesn't, though there's a little more to be said about it than that, but we won't go into it at the moment. If I ever get around to editing these remarks from transcript, I shall put 'vipassana' here in single inverted commas, to warn you that it is not the real thing that's being talked about, not the real vipassana.

Anyway, you are quite lucky not to have heard of this pseudo-vipassana before, much more still not to have actually encountered it.

All right - eight - who's next?

(8) To acquire the twofold merit born of right motives, right actions and the altruistic dedication of their results, there is need of unceasing efforts.

S: A note tells us that the twofold merit is expounded on page 97 note 2, so let's just look at that, those who have got the full edition.

This is "causal merit which is the fruit of charitable deeds and otherwise known as temporal merit, and resultant merit which arises from superabundance of causal merit, and otherwise called spiritual merit." It seems to be a difference of degree.

Manjuvajra: Is that not punya and jnana?

S: No, it isn't punya and jnana, its two different kinds of merit, two different kinds of punya.

Kamalasila: I always thought one was mundane and one was transcendental.

S: Well, it does say spiritual, it doesn't say transcendental.

Kamalasila: The translator, but Evans-Wentz is a bit sort of a strain.

S: He is a bit woolly sometimes, but you see "causal merit which is the fruit of charitable deeds and otherwise known as temporal merit, and resultant merit which arises from a superabundance of causal merit", so you cannot, as it were, transform punya into jnana simply as a result of abundance of punya. A separate element, which is to say the element of transcendental insight, has to enter in. So therefore I think, probably quite technically it's quite correct to speak of the resultant merit as spiritual, rather than as transcendental. Perhaps its a wee bit like the christian conception of supererogatory merits, that is to say, more merits

than are necessary for your own salvation. So, as it were, maybe the causal merit is the merit which is enough to ensure you a good rebirth, even a rebirth in heaven, but you can get such a superabundance of merits that they sort of far surpass anything that you require for the purposes of your own individual good rebirth, on the earth or in a heaven. So clearly there seems to be a difference of degree between the two, not a difference of kind, certainly not a difference of kind as between mundane and transcendental; at best mundane, or the temporal, the text says, temporal and spiritual.

It's almost so though, in the case of causal merits, you as it were, accumulate enough to ensure a good rebirth for yourself; but in the case of resultant merits you've so much got into the way of giving and doing all the other things that accumulate merit, you just don't think about results for yourself any more, you just go on doing it, and a superabundance of merits accumulates thereby. You aren't so goal oriented as before, in that particular sort of way.

Anyway: "to acquire the twofold merit, born of right motives, right actions and the altruistic dedication of their results, there is need of unceasing effort". Well, this again is almost a truism isn't it? What about this "altruistic dedication of their results"?

_____: For the benefit of other beings.

S: It's for the benefit of other beings. This is very much part of the Mahayana emphasis. That whatever you do, even whatever you do in the interests of your own individual spiritual development, should be dedicated so to speak, or "turned over" is the term actually (parinama) to the spiritual, or the material and spiritual welfare, of all sentient beings. So if you do this, this sort of altruistic dedication of the results of your own good actions, it counteracts any possible tendency that you may have in the direction of religious, or pseudo-spiritual individualism. It means you are not thinking in terms of your own enlightenment or your own salvation, in a narrow exclusive sense.

Nagabodhi: Could you not say that the dedication of your merits might actually have some objective value for other beings?

S: In what way?

Nagabodhi: Well, I'm asking is it just a personal antidote against your own pseudo-spiritual individualism, or is it...

S: To the extent that it counteracts your pseudo-spiritual individualism, to the extent that it steers you away from the Hinayana path, to the extent that it directs you into the Bodhisattva Path, to the extent that a Bodhisattva benefits all beings, and as a Buddha benefits all beings even more so, there is an objective result, an objective result, an objective good for all beings. Here the subjective is the objective. Or the objective springs from the subjective at least.

Nagabodhi: Would it be wrong though, to think you've done a good act or meditation, you dedicate your merit, and you can then imagine it floating up into the ether, and being thinly spread out -

S: (Chuckles) Well, sometimes people do think of merit in that way. Mundane merit, it seems, can be sort of effused around in that way. But whether Transcendental can - that is quite another matter. I'm not so sure about that, because it seems to treat it as almost a material thing. Whether people can be touched by the transcendental without their knowing it, this perhaps quite a question.

Manjuvajra: I used to think of it in terms of tuning yourself up, as though you were an instrument, getting yourself tuned up, sharpened up, so that you can then be used, or you can

sort of use yourself in the world as a tool for enlightenment.

S: So, there is an objective result ultimately from this altruistic dedication. It isn't just a subjective change of attitude within yourself. I mean, the subjective change of attitude itself, within you, does have objective results, inasmuch as it contributes to your pursuing the Bodhisattva Path which is objectively for the benefit of all and which does benefit all in the long run to the extent that you succeed in following it.

So this need of unceasing effort, not only in this context, but in other contexts too, this is quite a point. It's very tempting to let up, especially when the going gets tough or rough. Of course, not letting up does not exclude periods of, as it were, deliberate relaxation, in the interests of your own further activity. "Unceasing effort" doesn't mean that you work yourself to a standstill, or so that you have a nervous breakdown, and then can't be of use to anybody. "Unceasing effort" includes those periods of mindful relaxation, which refresh you, and which enable you to carry on. One shouldn't forget that. No Bodhisattva ever had a nervous breakdown, so far as we know.

Devaraja: Can you say a bit more about whether people can be touched by the Transcendental without knowing it? I thought that you were implying that people could benefit from more mundane merits shared without knowing it, and I just wondered if you'd elaborate a bit more on that.

S: Yes. Well, to benefit from what I call the touch of the Transcendental, you'd have to be aware of it as the Transcendental. There'd have to be a positive, receptive, attitude on your part, so you couldn't have a Transcendental influence around, just in the air as it were, affecting you and affecting your spiritual life without your knowing it, without your realising what was happening. But I think that you could have a mundane influence working in that sort of way. Just as when you feel a more happy positive atmosphere in a place, you may not think about it or really be very aware or conscious of it, but you are affected by it. I don't think the touch of the Transcendental could work in that sort of way, simply by virtue of the fact it is the Transcendental and not the mundane.

Mangala: How would it work?

S: Well, in a sense it doesn't work. Your co-operation is always required. To paraphrase Jaspers. You have to be aware of it as the Transcendental, respond to it as such.

Mangala: Perhaps it's more a matter of changing you, rather than something outside coming into you.

S: Well, it can be looked at as something coming into you from outside, but it isn't a power, as it were, which can operate irrespective of your wishes. That's the whole nature of the Transcendental. It is not a power. It cannot do anything of its own accord to you so to speak, even for your own good. You have completely to co-operate with it and to want to co-operate with it otherwise it is, as it were, powerless. You could say the spiritual is the powerless. It's much easier to defeat the Buddha than to defeat anybody else, because the Buddha of all people cannot fall back upon force or power. You can keep the Buddha out easily, you can keep the Transcendental out easily, anybody can do it. It's the easiest thing in the world to do, to exclude the Transcendental. The Transcendental has no power over you, so your absolute co-operation is required. So there can be no such thing as it influencing you without your knowing it.

[end of side one side two]

If it could, or did, it would cease to be the Transcendental. It would be a mundane influence of some kind. Well for it to influence you, you must want it to influence you, and open yourself to its influence, and then it can - But it can't do anything to you, or with you, against your will, so to speak.

Mangala: You're talk about the Transcendental as if it is actually some thing out there, or something equivalent to the world, which is actually -

S: Well, so long as one thinks and speaks dualistically, there's really no other way of putting it.

Mangala: The way I was seeing it was more a matter of, like, when you yourself reach a certain degree, or level, of refinement and receptivity I suppose -

S: Well, receptivity to what? The point of fact you use the word receptivity suggests that there is something to which you are receptive-

Mangala: Well, perhaps I mean just more sensitivity, more awareness of what...

S: Again the same thing - sensitive to what? Aware of what?

Mangala: Of the world, of the mundane, if you like, but your awareness becomes more and more heightened, more and more refined, and in a sense -

S: (interrupting) What do you develop then?

Mangala: I suppose, Insight eventually.

S: Yes, a Transcendental awareness. So if you want to speak of that Transcendental awareness, well the mere fact you speak about it at all, you make it an object. So, therefore, you can speak in terms of being receptive to the Transcendental as long as one is thinking, and speaking, within the dualistic framework, one cannot but make that an object and speak of it as though it were an object, even though by definition so to speak, it transcends the distinction of subject and object. I mean the subject/object distinction being just part of our unenlightened, mundane, way of looking at things.

Manjuvajra: I always think the Transcendental has got to be associated with consciousness. In other words you've got to be conscious of it for it to have any meaning.

S: Yes, this is again so far as we think and speak or even experience within the framework of our dualistic assumptions. Yes, we cannot but envisage the Transcendental as almost "out there". In the Pali scriptures Nirvana is spoken of as Nirvana-dhatu, dhatu being a sort of entity as it were, it is almost a sort of concrete abject, so long as we remain within the framework of dualistic consciousness. How else would we think about it at all? Otherwise it remains non-existent.

Mangala: Perhaps one way might be to see spiritual life more in terms of individual growth and development, rather than reaching something over there or attaining.

S: But even the concept of growth, as growth, implies a certain direction, and that implies a direction towards as it were. So really we have not to rest content with any one fixed or set mode of expression as though that really did represent the actual existing state of affairs. None of these modes of expression do. Therefore I sometimes say we need to use them poetically, rather than scientifically to convey a certain spirit, as it were - I don't like to fall

back on the word feeling but a certain spirit, as it were - not an objectively valid statement about something which actually exists out there. We may use that language, but we shouldn't take it too literally, well shouldn't take it literally at all.

Manjuvajra: You use the word Transcendental quite a lot, it's obviously one of your favourite words.

S: I wouldn't say that! One may simply be compelled by the exigencies of the situation.

Manjuvajra: Can you say a bit more about why you use that word? You've often talked about the Transcendental rather than the Buddha, or Enlightenment.

S: Well, for instance, perhaps first one prefers an English word to a Sanskrit one. Enlightenment I think can be devalued only too easily. It can be taken more in the sense of the Eighteenth century rationalist enlightenment, so I think that very often Enlightenment isn't a very satisfactory word, so when I want to guard against that sort of misunderstanding, I tend I think to use that word Transcendental. To speak in terms of say the experience of the Transcendental, rather than say speak in terms of Enlightenment or the Enlightenment experience. Transcendental is a more sort of neutral word, as it were.

Manjuvajra: Transcendental to me has a certain flavour of objectivity, of being other than the individual experiencing it which is -

S: Well in a way that is true, and it cannot be other. I also use the Transcendental quite technically as the translation of the Sanskrit Lokuttara which literally means "beyond the world", the hyper-cosmic, the transmundane. I use the Transcendental as a strict translation of lokuttara - whatever pertains to, whatever is beyond the point of no-return - all that is Transcendental. There's the Transcendental path, which means the path as from the point of no-return, that side of the path, the further side of the path, not the hither side of the path, and as a goal, if in fact the goal can be separated from the higher reaches of the Path. So I tend to use the word Transcendental in that sort of way. You are then able to speak of the Transcendental Path as well as the Transcendental as the goal or culmination of that path. On the other hand, I also make it clear that there is not literally some fixed and final point, at which you are aiming. We've gone into this quite thoroughly in the course of a recent seminar, but I can't really remember which one, and whether it was in England, or whether it was in New Zealand.

Mangala: The Tiratna Vandana.

S: Was it? But again, to come back to this question of the communication of the Dharma - one just has to use all the resources at one's disposal. Every communication of the Dharma is a tour de force, on every single occasion, or should be. It should be a sort of improvisation even. You shouldn't ever follow any set pattern, even though there may be certain observed regularities, just because people are very much alike, in certain respects, and their needs are very much alike, their attitudes are very much alike. But apart from that, every time you communicate the Dharma, you should communicate it afresh, from what you think and feel, as it were, about the Dharma here and now. The Dharma really is a product of communication, the Dharma does not exist as a thing, like a fixed subject. You cannot really read up about the Dharma like you read up about biology or mathematics. It's a constant improvisation between the relatively enlightened and the relatively unenlightened, or maybe between the relatively, or between the equally relatively enlightened or equally relatively unenlightened.

It is not a thing that you can swot up and then teach other people. Well, yes in a sense it is, say

historically speaking, but not really spiritually speaking.

Manjuvajra: It's like the written Dharma just gives you...

S: Gives you the language so to speak. Gives you a few clues. Not really very much more than that when it really comes to the point, when you're really confronted by Mrs Jones who's popped in to hear about Buddhism but is really interested more in a yoga class.

Therefore the Dharma is very intangible in a way. You can't really point to it. You can sort of reel off your Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path, but someone could learn all about those and not have really the faintest idea or feeling of what the Dharma was all about.

So I use this word Transcendental, if you like, yes, I do throw it around quite a lot, with I hope relatively happy effect, (chuckles) but I hope I'm not in fact just confusing people. To me it is a quite meaningful word.

Manjuvajra: I find that one very difficult.

S: I tend to stay off the expression Buddha-nature etc., just because of this sort of loose way in which the pseudo-zen people tend to use it.

Devaraja: It's just struck me, it seems to be almost like a positive counterpart at least, Lokuttara, Transcendental, of the term Sunyata - almost like a positive equivalent.

S: It's not really quite that. "Lokuttara" is a Theravada term. The Theravadins make great play with the distinction between the Lokia, the mundane, and Lokuttara, the Trans-mundane, let us say, whereas Sunyata can be at least four kinds. You've got the sunyata of the conditioned, and the unconditioned, and so on. So sunyata represents a more complex sort of concept, if you can call it a concept, in a way.

And of course, in the Theravada, or in basic Buddhism actually, because this point of view, or at least this language, is shared by all the different yanas and schools, there was a correlation between the Samskrta, the composite, and the mundane or Lokia and the incomposite or asamskrta and the Lokuttara or Trans-mundane or Transcendental.

You're really trying to suggest something beyond. What you are really trying to do in sort of practical terms, is yes, you are still thinking of growth and development, but you are as it were suggesting that if you really grow, and really develop, your growth and development, or that growth and development, will carry you far beyond anything that you can at present conceive of yourself as being, or even developing into. Your development will be so great, will go so far that you'll become something which you cannot even imagine, and it is that which is indicated by the word Transcendental. Not just some little modification of your present self, not just a little adjustment here, and improvement there. You'll be something radically different, even though what you are then will no more resemble what you are now than the beautiful butterfly resembles the ugly chrysalis. You'll be unimaginably different. You can't imagine what you will evolve into. It isn't just the old, say, Manjuvajra slightly refurbished, issued in a slightly improved and corrected edition. It isn't quite like that. It's a completely, inconceivably transfigured Manjuvajra that will eventually emerge at the end, the 'endless end' within inverted commas, of that process of development [Laughter] and it's that which you try to convey or communicate, when you use the word Transcendental.

"You", so to speak, will have gone through so many stages of development that that end product will bear apparently no resemblance whatever to you now. If you put the two side by side, so to speak, you could not imagine any connection between them, but actually the fact is

that you will have developed into that.

Mangala: Put in that way, 'growth' sounds a little bit feeble, doesn't it, sort of uninspiring.

S: Yes, especially as the so-called "growth movement" uses the term now. Just a little bit better, the word has really been debased.

Mangala: Something like 'Transformation' is a bit more...

S: Yes, if you look for instance at a flower, look at the difference between the seed and the bloom, look at the difference. If you use the word growth as applied to human beings, human development, you should think in those sort of terms, something as different as the little tiny dry wrinkled seed on the one hand, and the beautiful exotic exuberant colourful bloom on the other. But do people emerge from encounter groups, and encounter weekends, having gone through that sort of change? Because it is all supposed to be the growth movement. Well, they don't even seem to have to changed very much after 20 or 30 years of the growth movement and encounter marathons and all the rest of it.

Manjuvajra: We ought to start the "metamorphosis movement".

S: It's a metamorphosis, yes.

Nagabodhi: I find when I use the word Transcendental, not that I use it very often, but a lot of the audiences or people that I am talking to, they immediately think of TM. I feel the term has been very debased by them, and tends to suggest a mild buzz.

S: This is really one of the things that we are up against - that all the words we can use and do use are constantly being debased by other people. I sometimes use the word "Beyond", especially in writing, with a capital 'B', which suggests much the same thing so far as I'm concerned, as the Transcendental, the Beyond, the Further On, the over the horizon. One should perhaps try all these sort of expressions too so that people don't think that when you are speaking of growth and development, you just mean a slight sort of mental adjustment to the existing situation.

Devaraja: It's almost like you have to sort of vary your terms for the audience. If you're talking to spiritualists the word beyond could...

S: Yes, right! Or even the word Spiritual might not be the right one! Of course they'd all think they knew exactly what you were talking about.

Mangala: I suppose 'growth' also does imply a slightly natural organic process which just takes place by itself, whereas something like development implies you actually have to do something about it.

S: Yes. I think perhaps one should sometimes use the expression "conscious growth", yes? or purposeful growth, just to make it clear that it wasn't just a natural i.e. unconscious process that you could safely just leave to nature, and just not think about it any more, any more than the child in the womb thinks about growth or development.

So you must never take words or the meanings of words for granted. You must always make quite sure that you are in communication with the person you are talking to and are actually communicating with them. You mustn't take it for granted that if you use, or if you only use certain words, communication will then be guaranteed. That is never the case.

There's always the danger, even within the Movement itself, that people who are relatively on the periphery of the Movement or new to the Movement, will pick up the jargon, as it may well become, without really understanding or being in touch with what is being conveyed by those terms. Will use the accepted language of what to them appears the group, and pay lip-service to all that group's ideals just because they want to belong to that group.

Manjuvajra: And also we tend to use the jargon without actually realising that people don't understand what it means, and...

S: Not only when we're speaking to new people but even perhaps if we're speaking among ourselves, it can happen that the jargon starts becoming well actually a sort of, well a jargonish sort of thing. That you use without the full awareness of those terms that you should have in communicating with one another.

Nagabodhi: I'm thinking of the sort of sentence that you could happily see in the *Newsletter* - "we are trying to create the ideal conditions within which the individual can grow spiritually" - this is completely homespun.....

S: It's much too slick. I won't say it's smooth but you know what I mean.

Nagabodhi: But this sort of thing comes up all the time. It gives me quite a problem really, what to do about it.

S: Well this also say brings up the whole question of writing as well as speaking. The good writer is the writer who never falls back upon cliches, and it's very difficult to do. And if you try to do a bit of real writing you realise how difficult it is not to produce a cliché. They're springing from your pen, falling off your pen, all the time! And you have to consciously make an effort to weed out those cliches and to express what you actually think, what you actually feel. That means you have to ask yourself what you're actually thinking, what you're actually feeling, and then find exactly the right word, exactly the right arrangement of words, the exactly right arrangement of sentences which will give you emphasis that you want, the tone that you want, and so on.

So a literary effort of that sort almost amounts to a spiritual effort I would say. And this is why I feel in some cases the arts are spiritual disciplines because they call for that sort of rigorous self examination and self knowledge and self understanding. They don't let you get away with very much.

Manjuvajra: It does leave you feeling different. You can feel your mental states changed through having written something.

S: Even when you've written it badly, what to speak of when you've written it well as a result of very conscientious self examination. It's an exploration of oneself, it's an increase in one's self knowledge. But just think - supposing you get, even in the matter of correspondence, you get a letter from someone, and you start replying - 'I was very glad to receive your letter of the.....' Were you glad? You use that word perhaps every letter you write - 'I was glad to receive your' or 'I was happy to receive your ..' well is that word 'glad' or that word 'happy' exactly the right one to express what you felt? Or 'I was delighted' Were you delighted? 'I was pleased' Were you pleased? What was your actual feeling? Can you think back? How did you actually feel when you got that letter? Flattered? Surprised? Intrigued? [Laughter] It might have been a very subtle combination of reactions that you find it actually quite difficult to express. But you ignore all that, you just mechanically write 'happy to receive your letter'. You see what I mean? It's as difficult as that.

And then you go on. Every sentence presents you, almost every clause, every phrase, presents you with those sort of problems, which is really a problem of honesty, authenticity and so on.

Mangala: I think the trouble is a lot of letter writing now is just a formality almost isn't it. It's just a matter of replying out of courtesy. It's just something that's.....

S: Well if it's just a question of acknowledging someone's cheque, no one expects a sort of spiritual () when you write that letter but especially if you're really corresponding to real friends, or people who are really enquiring about the Dharma, this is what you should really expect to do. I'm sometimes surprised that people expect from me such quick slick cut and dried sort of answers to questions of a quite complex and difficult and profound nature. They almost seem to expect I should be able to sit down and dash off a short treatise! Or what is worse they seem to think sometimes that one can reply to those questions in just a couple of pages without thinking almost which seems extraordinary! Sometimes people don't realise what they're asking. Perhaps they didn't ask those questions really. They didn't realise what they were asking. Maybe they just almost mechanically produced those questions, to some extent anyway.

But you see how important the whole question of writing and also speaking is. People are very slipshod in their writing and in their speaking. They don't make full use of the language. Don't even know the language. They don't have its resources at their disposal, so their communication is very poor, very inadequate, very impoverished. They don't even know the words that..... well far from just not knowing the words, they don't know that they need those words because they aren't sufficiently conscious of their actual feeling or thought. They haven't clarified it to the extent where it becomes obvious that certain words are needed. How often do people look up the dictionary or look up the thesaurus but they should be looking it up all the time actually, if you see what I mean.

Not only editors but anybody who communicates, especially tries to communicate about the Dharma. If you read someone like say Dr. Johnson, he sometimes uses very difficult words, well words that are not in common use, but if you examine what he says almost always the difficult word is the only one that will serve his purpose. It is the exactly right word, because his thought is much more precise than people's thought usually is. Whether you agree or disagree with that thought that's an entirely different matter, but it has a precision which very few peoples' thought has.

So I think to have to write can be a spiritual discipline. To have to express can be a spiritual discipline, to have to communicate can be a spiritual discipline. But people so easily make do with, well not only words, *hums* and *hars* and *um*, *well*, *er*, *yes*, *er*, and this passes for communication! If you say what's your impression of this, what's your opinion? 'Oh I suppose I sort of like it'. This is presented as a sort of statement of opinion as it were, or reaction to something. Well that is not nearly good enough. It means you don't really know, you haven't bothered even to think.

Derek: Sometimes it might be as case of if someone asks you like that example, what you think of something, if you wouldn't have time to think about it at the moment I think you'd be better giving an answer with ums and ahs showing that you are looking for your feelings, rather than giving some sort of alienated kind of cliched statement which would be easy.

S: Yes you have to keep the ball of communication rolling and just make a few remarks but make it clear they are provisional and you really are still thinking about it and maybe can have a proper talk about it later on. Just say that.

I, for instance had the experience of people saying to me over lunch. 'what do you really think about Nirvana?' in between mouthfuls as it were. Apparently expecting me to tell them. It's incredible isn't it. I used actually, in my younger days, to try to tell them, but people are more likely now to get a rather off-putting reply.

Mangala: Keep an Aryan silence.

S: No, I wouldn't say that. That would be shirking the issue.

But how did we get onto this. This came about from the Transcendental and then communication. That we need really to scrutinise the words that we use and the concepts that we employ, and to employ them with awareness and with liveliness and intelligence. Within the Movement generally we are really lacking in this way. That's why we've got so few good writers. It's not just because people don't know how to write, they haven't been born with that skill; it isn't just that. It really is a lack of the sort of qualities I've mentioned, or the sort of effort I've mentioned.

Manjuvajra: It's only when you start to do things like that that you realise all your failings.

S: Yes, right. You try to write something which is lively and vivid but something quite dull and stereotyped comes out. Of course you must also be fair to yourself. You must give yourself time and leisure. You can't always just produce it at a moment's notice, even though, perhaps in the long run, you are capable of producing something reasonably good, but you're not necessarily able to do it at very short notice. You may need to work on it quite a bit because that type of production's not become habitual to you yet. So you may need fair warning.

I was reading recently that someone defined a journalist as the man who could do his best work under the least favourable conditions. That's pretty good isn't it. I'm sure you know what he means. But I'm sure you've also sometimes done your best work under the least favourable conditions, so you qualify as a journalist you see.

Devaraja: It's funny, I notice that sometimes in a brief bit of journalism that it's often better than a hundred novels you might have read just because it must be such a tough situation. There is such a thing as a sort of verbal journalism. That out of the exigency of the situation you improvise quite brilliantly. I'm sure you can do that on paper too, if you're trained to it. Here something happens and you've got to write about it, you've only got three hours in which to produce an article, you sit down at your typewriter and you do it. Because there's the immediacy of your response, you're inspired maybe by that. Or at least urged on by that. You're accustomed to handling words so they're all sort of ready, and maybe you're in the mood to, at least when you get going. You produce a good article and you're quite pleased with that piece of work. That's what probably journalism at its best is all about. It's not a considered sort of thing. That is for the weekly or the monthly or annual - journalism is what is produced for the day and about the day. It's journalism jour-nalism - jour is day, it's per diem, that's its time scale or time span - 24 hours. It's got to be seen, heard and thought about if there's time and written about and set up and printed and published all within 24 hours. That's journalism.

_____: And discarded.

S: And discarded. Yes you have to accept that too. The best of your journalistic work may be gathered together into a slim volume after a few years but perhaps not. Yes, you've given of your best and someone reads it - 'that's pretty good', tosses it aside, reads something else the next day.

So a journalist has to be quite detached from his work, as well as have tremendous enthusiasm for it and be really into it and committed to it, but detached from it at the same time, detached from its results anyway. He accepts that they are ephemeral. He's a journalist, he's not a writer. Well he may be using journalism as a means of supporting himself while he becomes a writer. He may hope that some of his pieces can be gathered together at the end of the year and made into a little book which will help him to become a writer. But that's not the pure journalist so to speak. The pure journalist goes on writing year after year, decade after decade, without ever even thinking perhaps of collecting his little pieces into a volume. So he's really detached isn't he.

Anyway we've got a bit off the track but never mind. This also connects with 'unceasing effort'. We did get onto this subject a bit didn't we. Unceasing effort. How easy it is just to slacken off, as distinct from consciously relaxing in the wider interest of what you are actually doing. Of course perhaps we can say again that you can only keep up this unceasing effort if there's vision and if there's inspiration. Otherwise, sooner or later, if it's just question of flogging yourself, you'll come to a full stop. You won't be able to go on any more.

All right on to nine.

(9) The mind, imbued with love and compassion in thought and deed, ought ever to be directed to the service of all sentient beings.

S: Well this brings us to the very important question of not just love and compassion but positive emotion in general. Other positive emotions being of course faith and joy, one could even include peace.

I've been thinking for the last several years that the positive emotions are really very very important. They seem to become as it were more and more important. The importance of the positive emotions is no doubt connected with the importance of enthusiasm and inspiration and vision and so on. One notices that there's very little of positive emotion around in the world. One sometimes wonders why. One doesn't want to dwell upon it though because the dwelling on it beyond a certain point becomes sort of counterproductive, becomes negative in itself. There needs to be much more in the way of positive emotion.

Have you ever wondered why people are not more emotionally positive than they actually are? Why don't people go around in a state of happiness and joy and delight? There seems to be no reason why they shouldn't.

Manjuvajra: I think they leave it all to chance. It really seems to be only Buddhism that actually talks about being able to develop positive emotion.

S: But even apart from that why shouldn't you just wake up in the morning happy after a good night's sleep? Isn't that what you would expect of a healthy person and what you sometimes do see. Why aren't more people able to? Or they don't sleep well perhaps to begin with.

Mangala: They don't enjoy life very much. They've probably got some lousy job and hassles with mortgages and bills and family problems.

S: You mean they could wake up happy in the morning if it wasn't for all those things? Very young people sometimes wake up happy in the morning. Very small children very often do, don't they. So it must be that we lose it at some stage for some reason or other, not of just a sort of pseudo-idealistic nature but just for sound practical reasons or definite practical

reasons or concrete practical reasons.

Kamalasila: People have got responsibilities but they haven't got any inspiration. They've got all these things that they've got to look after.

S: But why is the inspiration not there?

Kamalasila: No ideals.

S: I mean is it merely because you've got say responsibilities that you wake up not feeling very happy. Just look back over your own experience. Do you ever sort of sometimes wake up happy and if so why or how? Are you aware of it diminishing sometimes. Why is that? When is it that you just wake up and feel most happy and most joyful that here's another glorious day to be getting on with. When does that tend to happen?

Derek: It seems to be a lack of awareness. You're caught in small details. When we see a problem, your own problem with your work or your family or whatever. You're not aware of just life itself and which is positive.

S: What is it that makes it possible for you to wake up in the morning feeling completely happy as you sort of start thinking about the day?

Nagabodhi: For myself when I'm doing something that's totally absorbing. It's various things. Sometimes it might be something quite refined, sometimes it might be something quite gross but it's something that I know is going to involve me completely.

S: I think in simpler terms it's probably when you wake up the prospect of doing what you want to do, whatever it may be. That here you are, you've had a good night's sleep, you're fresh, you're bright, and here you are - today you're going to be doing this, that or the other which is what you want to do. You're free to go for a walk in the country if that's what you really want to do, or to get on with your writing if that's what you want to do or to meditate. You're free to do it and it's what you want to do. I think you tend to wake up happily if you wake up to the possibility of doing what you want to do which is very often the case with children.

Or in the case of children perhaps they can't think far enough ahead. We can be depressed waking up today at the thought of what we've got to do this time next year, which is ridiculous! What to speak of next week.

Manjuvajra: Kids don't have any consciousness about responsibility and having to do anything.

S: So you should be very careful about assuming responsibilities which are too heavy for your inspiration, your degree of inspiration to be able to support.

Nagabodhi: Overworked and undercommitted! [Laughter]

S: Yes overworked and underinspired. It's like a flame. If you put onto the flame just the right amount of dry fuel it will help the flame to blaze up all the more and then you can put a bigger bit of fuel. But if there's a poor little flame just struggling and at once you heap on top of it, even with the best of intentions, a great big pile of rather damp wood, you're just going to put that poor little flame out. So this is the sort of thing that sometimes happens. You've just got to feed the flame of your inspiration with enough work and responsibility to make it blaze higher but not so much that it virtually extinguishes it.

I'm sure most of you have done that sort of thing at some stage or other in some connection. I hope none of you are actually doing it now. So either you've got to lighten the load of fuel or take extra pains to blow up the flame. You can of course carefully insert a bellows and just blow and blow so that the flame sort of leaps up despite all that heavy mass of fuel that's been piled on top of it, and sort of seizing hold of the fuel, or you can just take a bit of fuel off and give the flame a bit more freedom, a bit more air naturally.

Manjuvajra: What would be the bellows in this case?

S: Well it could be the good spiritual friend taking you by the hand and giving you an inspiring talk or something like that. But it could be something quite different. It could be just actually taking a day off, even when perhaps you haven't got time to take a day off but you do it none the less.

I think what you should beware of is sort of drugs, keeping yourself going with the emotional equivalent of drugs. If you can only keep going if you allow yourself regular visits to the pub or because you've got a girlfriend round the corner, or because you can just go and see the occasional tenth rate film - this is what keeps you going. This is not a very good condition to be in. That you're only kept going on these sort of emotional equivalents of barbiturates.

Manjuvajra: The reward system.

S: A reward system even, yes. You get a bit of gratification from whatever it is that you reward yourself with, and that keeps you going. So it's not at all good to be kept going in that way instead of as a result of genuine inspiration and vision.

[End of tape four tape five]

But this again touches on something which I touched on yesterday, I don't remember in which study group - the importance of doing what you want to do. Was it in this study group? Yes. Doing what you want to do in the deepest and truest sense. Not just following any little whim or fancy.

So emotion is really the driving force and positive emotion is the driving force of positive action. Inspiration would seem to be the driving force of any kind of spiritual activity, ambition.

So yes, Love and Compassion among these positive emotions are very very important indeed, the mind imbued with Love and Compassion, in thought and deed, forever to be directed to the service of all sentient beings. Unless the bodhisattva really is imbued with Love and Compassion, unless his mind is imbued with Love and Compassion and expresses that in his thoughts and deeds how can he possibly ever fulfil the career of a bodhisattva and benefit living beings? It's only the energy he derives from these emotions which can possibly keep him going. Even the bodhisattva needs positive emotion.

So to think that you can possibly run, so to speak, a spiritual movement without positive emotion is ridiculous. A sense of duty is not enough. Intellectual conviction is not enough. Feelings of guilt are not enough. Feelings of obligation are not enough. It's only positive emotion, inspiration and vision that can keep the whole thing going.

Mangala: I suppose it wouldn't really be a spiritual movement in any case without that (unclear) from those motives.

S: Well even with just positive emotion it wouldn't be more than a positive group - you've got to have inspiration and vision too to make it a spiritual movement. (long pause)

It also occurs to me, I've mentioned among the positive emotions Love and Compassion which of course are mentioned in the precept, and then Faith - one should say that's Faith and Devotion, and then Joy, and Peace - there's also of course Reverence which is a little distinct from Faith and Devotion, but there's another word, or rather we haven't got a word - it's the emotion that you experience when you give. We don't in the English have a word for this do we? We can say the emotion of Generosity but that isn't quite right. Do you agree, or perhaps you don't agree that when we give something there is a definitive distinctive emotion for which there should be a different word available?

Voice: Devotion?

S: No, supposing you go to see someone and you take them a bunch of flowers, you really are happy giving them that - well that is a distinct emotion I think.

Voice: Love. [Laughter]

S: Well it's a particular kind of love isn't it? Love, if it is love, which expresses itself in giving. It seems to be a different sort of feeling. Well let's say maybe you don't love that particular person, but you give something. Perhaps you don't love them in the sense of loving them if you know what I mean (laughter) but you give and you have a definite emotional experience when you give and it seems to me that it's very important, and I'm talking now within the context of the Movement, to cultivate this. I think there is not enough giving within the Movement, people don't give one another things enough. Do you see what I mean? People don't give presents - well maybe very often they haven't got the money but you can sometimes make one even if you aren't able to buy one, yes? I think perhaps this is one of the things that people associate with conventional social life and which they sort of discount because it's connected with conventional social life and they thereby throw away the baby with the bathwater.

There doesn't have to be a reason for giving somebody something, you feel like giving and so you give. In many primitive societies and even quite sophisticated civilised societies giving occupies a very important place. It does for instance among Tibetan Buddhists. The constant exchange of gifts, not that you deliberately exchange but one person gives, A gives to B and then of course either on that occasion or some other occasion B gives to A. Of course it can become a bit sort of conventional and even mechanical as anything can, but that doesn't mean one should not ever engage in these things. Just because they can become mechanised or even ritualised in the negative sense of that term. But giving expresses one's warmth and one's feeling towards a person which doesn't exactly amount to love. Love being a pretty ambiguous word anyway.

Kamalasila: It's a sort of sharing of your feeling of non-attachment in a sort of positive way.

S: Yes, that's right, because if you give something, you give away something. You sacrifice something perhaps to put it rather strongly. You're giving up something certainly. You've gone to some trouble and it's as though you're sharing a moment of selflessness with somebody because not only do you give - they receive. Some people find it very difficult to receive just as others find it difficult to give. So if you sort of come together in that way through the gift and one person is giving up something, the other is receiving something well they do share one might even say a moment of egolessness, to an extent.

Devaraja: It's almost like becoming larger as well.

S: Yes. I think perhaps we haven't sort of cultivated this sufficiently, obviously not too self-consciously.

Kamalasila: People give each other clothes and things don't they?

S: Perhaps it isn't quite like that always - you know you've got this jumper which you haven't worn for a couple of years and you say to someone "Would you like this jumper?" - it's not quite the same sort of thing. As if you sort of go out and get something specially for somebody - you see what I mean? Of course if it is your prized jumper, the one you like best, and the one you wear every day, that's perhaps a different matter, but you're more likely to give your old discarded jumper which is gone at the elbows and you don't need any more (laughter) instead of giving it to the jumble sale you give it to him direct. Well no, that's OK sure, I'm not running that down but it isn't giving a gift in quite the same way.

If you give a gift in this full way you consider what the other person likes, for instance if he doesn't know French you don't give him a French novel, if you see what I mean. Or if he doesn't like sweets you don't give him a great big bar of chocolate. You consider the person's needs. You think, what would they like? Or, what do they need, even? What would give them pleasure to receive? And you devote a certain amount of thought to it. Maybe you take trouble to get that particular thing, maybe it isn't easy to get, maybe it's a book that's out of print...

Kamalasila: It's quite an art.

S: Yes it's quite an art, and then there's the choosing of the right moment or even you could say if you really want to go into it the wrapping of it up etc etc. And then perhaps the person if he is himself a bit aware he realises that it couldn't have been easy for you to get this or to find it and he appreciates all the trouble that you've taken, also he's really pleased he's got something that he's been thinking about or wanting for quite a while. In a way, giving in that way implies an awareness of the other person and his needs so it becomes a form of communication. You don't just sort of dash into a shop and buy the first thing that meets your eye and just sort of give it to him like that. Not like suddenly remembering Aunt Mary's birthday.

Derek: The emotion of giving, well to me anyway, seems connected with a feeling of purity.

S: Yes. (pause) Also the same thing applies to giving people a meal. I must confess I get quite annoyed sometimes when I see the slapdash or slovenly way in which this is done sometimes, I sometimes take even the people in the community here to task a little bit, though they're not too bad I must say, because if you invite people for a meal you should take pains over it because it is a form of giving isn't it? And make sure that a really nice meal is prepared and that someone who knows how to cook well does it that particular day. So that you give them an enjoyable meal, otherwise what's the point of inviting people? And people feel that some effort has been made because you're glad to see them and want to give them a good meal and a good evening. That all helps communication. But if you turn up and I say "Oh Good heavens! I forgot that you were coming this evening" that isn't a very promising start to the evening is it? I say "Well there's not really very much, let's just look in the fridge and see what there is" that isn't exactly hospitality in the best Buddhist sense. But you see what I mean? And often these sort of things are neglected.

Dhammamati: The emphasis in the text is on thought and deed so that giving is really quite a way of exercising both those - you're thinking it and there's an action involved as well.

S: I don't know why word isn't mentioned because you can express Love and Compassion verbally too. This should surely not be forgotten.

Manjuvajra: The way you were describing buying gifts and giving people meals seems to reflect a whole way of life... (**S:** It really does), that we seem to, well I feel quite out of touch with.

S: Yes. Especially after coming from India I feel people - I mustn't over-generalise - but certainly many of our Friends are so crude and uncultivated even uncultured in this sort of way and lacking in sensitivity and awareness. The Indians more often than not really do these things really quite beautifully. It is their cultural tradition so to speak. For instance, I've even thought of things like when you get someone from outside the community, outside the FWBO, and they come for a meal and someone brings the meal, and it's "Boomp!" banged down on the table in front of them - this is so sort of graceless if you see what I mean, it indicates such a lack of awareness and sensitivity. Or they just sort of slide it over the table - it's dreadful! [Laughter] Well these things do happen! All these things are messages. They're all forms of communication, they're all saying something. And sometimes the message is "We're just a lot of louts and we don't care a damn about you or what you think or feel". This is the message that comes across.

So everything that you do is a language and conveys a message. I'm not suggesting that you think in terms of gracious living in the middle class sense, but I think you know what I'm getting at. If you're meditating every day and developing an awareness of the Dharma etc., etc., you should be becoming more sensitive and more aware in your dealings with people. More aesthetically aware. And these things have an effect on your own mind if you behave in this sort of way or live in the corresponding surroundings. Sometimes you can't help it, sometimes you need money for these things but usually some improvement can be made.

Kamalasila: In the area of hospitality for travellers this often seems to be quite lacking because quite often people have travelled quite long distances to get places and when they actually get there it can be quite difficult in various ways.

S: Yes, well very often people don't think - the Indians do, the Indians are very good in this way. But sometimes even in our own communities people don't think - well maybe they are busy or maybe they have got other things to do and that should be appreciated but nonetheless you should make an effort just to see that people get what they need, however quickly you may have to do that, and you may have to explain, well you're busy you haven't got much time but at least you can say 'help yourself', at least you can say that.

Padmaraja: I just remember this story that I heard about West London, actually. People went there, I think they stayed for Order day and everybody got up for breakfast - they were just sitting around this empty table everybody was too embarrassed to say anything (laughter) So in the end I think somebody just got up and walked out to the local shop and bought a packet of *Weetabix* (laughter).

S: I think in West London it's probably not only an empty table but an empty cupboard and an empty bowl as well! But also guests must appreciate the situation because you might arrive at a time when the cupboard is bare and there is no money. You might arrive at some such time.

Padmaraja: Somebody should say something then! [Laughter]

S: Yes surely somebody should say "Look we're very sorry but we just don't have anything that costs any money but if someone can produce some money we don't mind going and

doing the shopping so that we can have breakfast with you..."

Devaraja: It's awful when you get the community sitting around the table with their knives and forks in their hands saying "It's OK we got a guest so we can eat today!" (laughter)

S: It's almost as though they're going to eat the guest!

Manjuvaja: One of the best meals that I ever had was at *Golgonooza* a couple of weeks ago, it was really incredible, it was really well laid on. A superb meal. And there were all those things that you were talking about I felt were there, they really prepared themselves for it.

S: Well that's really very good. I think it should just become more widespread, and not just the odd lavish occasion and it doesn't even have to be ... (drowned out by laughter) ... and you don't always have to have bottles of wine etc., etc., even if the fare is simple whoever has been invited should be made welcome, care should have gone into the preparation of everything. I really think in the movement as a whole we are very lacking in this sort of way. We're lacking in a few as it were natural social graces. Again I think it's probably the reaction of many people against their or maybe other people's middle class background and manners but again we mustn't throw away the baby with the bathwater, I'm sorry to repeat this old cliché but again you know what I mean I hope.

Devaraja: I wonder if it is entirely that because the thing is that I think it's partly due to the fact that particularly living in the city - I think it's more prevalent in a city - is that people in actual fact don't entertain very much for a start.

S: (interrupting) You're talking about people in ordinary social life. (a few words unclear)

Devaraja: No not just their friends. And I think also that people tend to go out and eat a lot, somebody was telling me about Helsinki in fact that it was quite a revolutionary step when they invited people around for a meal because Finns are - they automatically always go out to a restaurant. They hardly ever entertain in their own homes.

S: Well, Chinese do that. When I was in Malaysia I was entertained in restaurants entirely, I don't think I was invited to anybody's home and it seemed to be the social custom to entertain your guest in restaurants but the restaurants were beautifully organised and you were beautifully entertained there. Everything was so immaculately laid on and with such efficiency and you really were made welcome. So it's just a different way of doing things. I'm not so sure that in England or Britain generally people don't entertain? My own contacts outside of the FWBO suggest that a lot of it still goes on.

Devaraja: But I don't think quite in that sense of the there's a stranger - I mean they prepare for the special occasion, a dinner party or something but just like a stranger coming, that sense of really being made welcome, really ...

S: Well yes that's true, in India you get that but then that implies a whole sort of social set up. That someone could come wandering from far away and just happen to turn up at your house but here this is hardly possible. He's got to sort of walk up the front steps and knock on the door and say what he's come about he can't just say "I'm a stranger please take me in." Yes? In India if someone looks out of the door and just sees someone wandering past and he seems a bit lost and doesn't belong to the place, it's always known you see that he's a stranger, a friendly person will say "Come in". And produce something to eat and drink. It's quite difficult for that to happen in a big city, for, as it were, almost technical reasons.

Devaraja: Also another thing. I wonder if it's due partly to the fact that at the age that people come into the Movement - it's like they come into the Movement at a level where they haven't yet developed certain social graces. I mean they're used perhaps to say their parents entertaining but in a way they haven't acquired the ability to - or those skills - to be able to do it themselves.

S: They are skills, actually, which it seems have to be learned. I think also - one must also be quite fair - some communities are a bit resistant to visitors or strangers or newcomers even from within the Movement so to speak just because often they don't behave very considerately. So if you're not careful a sort of resistance builds up just because you've had one or two unfortunate experiences. But you shouldn't allow that to happen. I mean for instance someone turns up and without saying anything he goes to the fridge and he just sort of uses up all the butter and you can't get any more that day so there isn't any more for later on. Well that sort of thing is inconsiderate but sometimes that does happen.

So the host, as it were, must be considerate but then the guest also must be considerate. I mean if he's one of those people who just turn up for the occasion, not someone who's been invited for the occasion.

Well I'm not in favour of things being entirely planned and anticipated and provided for. I think that there has got to be scope for the unexpected, even the unexpected visitor, and you should be able just to adjust to deal with that situation in a positive and skilful, and if possible graceful, manner. I do really notice this. A lot of our Friends have got no social skills whatever they don't even know how to go up and talk to a stranger, how to introduce themselves and get chatting. They just don't know how to do it, which really seems extraordinary but it is as though these things are skills that have to be acquired and learned and even taught, in a sense, even if it's only by example. And this is why the behaviour of many people even within the Movement strikes me very often as just loutish. Even on the occasion of say public meetings, lectures, festivals.

For instance, you know that I'm giving eight lectures in the autumn and I was just sort of running over in my mind the names of eight possible chairmen, and I realised what a shortage there was of people who could just stand up before my lecture and introduce it in a few well chosen words. Certainly not all the Order Members are able to do this maybe not more than one in five or six are able to do this which is really terrible. Everybody ought to be able to do that. You can imagine the sort of uncomfortable, embarrassed sort of way in which some people might just do that sort of simple thing. Not knowing how to cope with that sort of situation. Again that isn't good - or how to welcome people. Some people don't know how to welcome people when they turn up. It's partly - one must admit - partly because the old sort of social customs have been given up and new ones haven't been acquired, Buddhist ones certainly haven't been acquired. So you don't go up to them and shake hands introduce yourself - no that's all the old middle class social thing. But so you just don't anything and they're just left uncomfortably hovering just inside the door not feeling particularly welcome. Very often women are better than men in adapting or adjusting to social conditions and so on for some reason or other. And they're more likely perhaps in some centres to go up and welcome the stranger and say a few words.

Padmaraja: Very often it's more than just not knowing how to handle the situation it's just the complete lack of awareness of how the other person could be feeling.

S: Yes, this is true also, yes. And also there's sometimes I'm afraid - I don't want to get too negative - but sometimes there's a certain sullenness and resentment that you have to bother at all. One detects quite a bit of that sort of thing. Almost that they are intruders and they are disturbing you. You want to talk with your friends perhaps. Or just not bother talking to anybody.

And also another thing is I think people don't sort of introduce people to one another sufficiently - this is also sometimes necessary. For instance I had to mention this on retreat here recently and I said well there were some people I don't know on this retreat I've never seen them before, would someone who knows them please bring them along and introduce them, because they don't always feel able to walk up to you and introduce themselves, so somebody who already knows them, maybe the retreat organiser, can well do that. Just bring him along and introduce him, after that you know each other and you know who you are. But we are rather lacking in those sort of little ways that just make social life and contact and communication that bit more easy.

Manjuvajra: I've got a point connected with visitors to communities. In the past I've visited places and people have shown a lot of kindness to me in putting me up and meals and so on. And yet because of living in a community you're limited in the amount that you can do for them although you would like to do it. That seems to me to be a shortcoming of community living. Is there any way you can think of that we could get around that?

S: Well we did suggest in the early days of Sukhavati there should be someone who was, I think I used the word 'guestmaster' borrowing the term from Buddhist tradition, or someone with the definite responsibility of receiving visitors, guests, and looking after them, making them welcome and if they were going to stay finding them a place to stay etc. I believe the housekeeper does this at the moment but I'm not sure, at Sukhavati I mean. Otherwise if it's not anyone's - if it's everybody's responsibility then it tends to be nobody's responsibility unless it's a very sort of aware community in which case whoever is around just does whatever is necessary.

Manjuvajra: I was thinking more actually of the personal contact and the guestmaster could deal well with guests who were guests of the community because it was a Buddhist community although they weren't perhaps there on the personal invitation from a member of the community, but sometimes you want to offer hospitality to someone who may not even be a Buddhist, may not even be particularly interested, but you still have a certain feeling towards them and would like to give them something.

S: Perhaps if it doesn't seem the best thing to invite them back to the community, well you can always invite them out for a meal, invite them to a restaurant, or do what the Chinese do.

Devaraja: There was a problem for me in that sort of area recently. My sister-in-law's sister came over to England and I wasn't able to offer her anywhere to stay and I tried to ask the girls at *Beulah* but they weren't prepared to have anybody stay with them for a few nights. It felt like quite a difficulty, it felt like a relative who had come a long way and I really wanted to be able to ...

S: Well we certainly have it on the boards that we have a hostel and that might well cover that difficulty. It would not only be a hostel as it were where we could put up passing casual Buddhists who were sort of passing through London and made contact with us maybe not especially interested in the Friends but anyway some connection with the Dharma so we just help them by offering them hostel accommodation so perhaps those facilities could be extended to say personal friends or relations of people involved in the Movement under those sort of circumstances.

Presumably it can sometimes conceivably be a bit embarrassing if you can't offer somebody hospitality in that way and it isn't always possible to explain your sort of situation, it might seem as though you are trying to wriggle out of it. Suppose people know that you are staying in a certain place it is not easy to explain that it's a men's community and you don't put up ladies overnight or it's difficult to explain "Well look it's a women's community and they do

take in women there, but they're not very keen on taking someone from outside the Movement", well it makes it all sound rather exclusive doesn't it? Or unfriendly. You can't very well say that. It could lead to misunderstandings - so perhaps a hostel would help to solve this sort of difficulty.

But what it really boils down to is that expressions of love and compassion should be more diverse and find perhaps even more social expression than we have been accustomed to thinking. You shouldn't confine your Metta to your weekly Metta Bhavana or whatever it might happen to be. Even your daily Metta Bhavana.

Anyway, we've gone actually over time, but never mind, we'll leave number ten for tomorrow and then we'll go straight on to 'the ten things to be done'. Any final point about what we've just been doing? We've made several wide detours but perhaps they were quite necessary or at least useful detours. I must say apropos of what we have just been talking about, I've been feeling this quite strongly for some time. 'Uncouth' is the word that has often occurred to me I'm afraid, that in our social life or relations far too many people in the Friends are a bit uncouth. And I felt it all the more after coming from India. And it did suggest a lack of awareness and sensitivity and consideration for other people.

Some people have got a micchaditthi of this pseudo-informality. Yes? It suggests a certain freedom and liberation if you're just rude almost or inconsiderate.

Manjuvajra: I remember in hippy days it was almost the worst thing you could do was actually talk to someone when they arrived at your house. You just opened the door and went back to your joint and left them to find themselves a -

S: (interrupting) Yes, to wander around and make themselves coffee. Yes I mean this is what I gathered that it was not quite the thing to offer them coffee etc. Really weird isn't it? What do you think it meant? It must have meant something or had some reason - even some justification originally.

Manjuvajra: Well I think it was an attempt to get away from you know conditioned purely formal politeness.

S: For instance a lot of those people must have heard their parents say something like "Oh good heavens! The Jones' are coming tonight. Oh what a bore. I wish we could get out of it!" - Half an hour later the door opens - "Oh, hallo so glad (drowned by laughter) delighted, do come in" and the children have been hearing all these things you see before and maybe it's that sort of thing that had disgusted them with the conventional patterns of social behaviour. Well one can't be surprised, hm?

Devaraja: And the other thing is "We'd better invite so and so around - we owe them a dinner".

S: Yes. That is quite a common expression isn't it - "We owe them a dinner". Even people say "We'd like you to come around for a meal next week, we owe you a dinner". They say that don't they? Well mainly jokingly now but still that expression is used. All right let's leave it there for now.

Next Session

Through hearing, understanding, and Wisdom one should so comprehend the nature of all things as not to fall into the error of regarding matter and phenomena as real.

S: "Through hearing, understanding and Wisdom" - this is a well known triad isn't it? I expect most of you have come across it before. It's usually of course explained as the three kinds of Wisdom - the Wisdom that comes by hearing, the Wisdom that comes by reflection and the Wisdom that comes by one could say actual experience eh? It's Bhavanamaya which is meditation in a sense but literally becoming or even cultivation. One could say the Wisdom that comes by or from meditation experience or actual spiritual experience.

Manjuvajra: Sorry I'm a bit confused about that. Could that also be connected with if you come across a particular teaching, first of all you learn it, then you come to understand it intellectually and then after a while you begin to realise it's really -

S: (interrupting) Yes, I have talked about this at length on some other occasion, I don't exactly remember when, but we have gone into this quite thoroughly on one of the seminars not so very long ago. That first of all you hear, and before you can hear you must listen or you must read you must read carefully you must actually take in the material really be receptive to it, undistractedly. And then from time to time turn it over in your mind, reflect upon it dwell upon it - do you see what I mean? And then start gradually penetrating into it, in a concentrated sort of way, so that you don't just understand it, it starts seeming part of you. You're not even meditating on it, you are it now, so you are transformed into it and this is bhavanamaya prajna. So these are the three well known stages and one should apply this in a way to everything that one hears especially of a Dharmic nature. Hear it, pay attention to it, listen to it carefully, turn it over in one's mind, consider it, reflect upon it and then if it is worth treating in that way gradually make it a part of one's own life and one's own experience.

One shouldn't be misled by this term "Wisdom" by the way. It isn't an exclusively sort of cognitive experience. You could say even that the Wisdom that comes by hearing represents receptivity and the Wisdom that comes by reflection represents absorption and the Wisdom that comes by meditation represents transformation. It is really more like that.

For instance you are receptive to the teaching about say Sunyata, you absorb it and you are transformed by it. This is in fact what is happening. Not that you develop a certain kind of Wisdom by reading about it and then you develop another kind of Wisdom by thinking about it and then another kind of Wisdom by meditating upon it. Yes? That is much too external and artificial.

So "Through hearing, understanding and Wisdom one should so comprehend the nature of all things as not to fall into the error of regarding matter and phenomena as real." I take it that 'matter' here corresponds to the Sanskrit term 'rupa' and 'phenomena' to 'dharma' - in the plural dharmas. So what does it mean to consider or to regard matter and phenomena as real? Does it mean as it were persuading yourself that even though you think that you see them in fact you don't, is it that? What does it mean?

Derek: It probably means not as ultimately real.

S: Not as ultimately real, yes.

Dharmamati: Impermanent.

S: As seeing them as impermanent too, yes. So if you as it were are receptive to things, receptive to the true nature of things and you absorb that and you become one with that then you don't see things as being ultimately real unchanging entities. You don't think in terms of either matter - which is the more popular misunderstanding - or of the dharmas in the abhidharma way - which is the more sophisticated misunderstanding.

Mangala: I suppose in terms of behaviour this would mean that you don't get attached to things.

S: You don't get attached to them as ultimately real and unchanging. 'Cos that's what you want to make them or to see them as when you become attached to them. So through hearing understanding and Wisdom it really means that by being receptive to the true nature of existence you absorb that and become one with it. In a way Sunyata is suggested or implied here isn't it? (pause)

Also there is another way of looking at it that if you regard matter and phenomena as real you are regarding the subject-object framework not as being as it were provisional and only relatively real but as an absolute itself. Because within that framework you see as it were out there absolute objects, entities, which don't change and which are ultimately real which means that you are accepting the subject-object framework as ultimately real, whereas according to Buddhism that is just a reading or interpretation of your experience. You read or you interpret your experience in terms of a subject experiencing an object but actually it is not really so. And as part of that general delusion you see certain things 'out there' which you regard as being matter or as objects in the Abhidharma sense, and as being ultimately real as objects as though an object as such can be ultimately real. And you consider yourself as it were 'in here' as the perceiving unchanging subject, similarly as being ultimately real. But actually there is just experience without a sort of alienated subject of the experience or as it were alienated objects of the experience. There is a sort of experience continuum within which those discriminations can be made but which when they are made beyond a certain point just distort the whole of your experience and make it completely unreal. (long pause)

So hearing, understanding and Wisdom are a requirement inasmuch as it's only on their account or because of them or with them that one can really see things as they really are and not fall into the mistake of thinking that objects and by implication the subject which you discriminate within that general subject-object framework are themselves ultimately real.

Nagabodhi: Bhante, you can look back on your experience and contemplate impermanence and you can take up, say, a vipassana meditation practice to contemplate impermanence, but to what extent is it a safe thing to do, just on the level of thinking and understanding, to try and be aware of impermanence or the unreality of things. I can see how you - I know the teaching and I know of meditation practices I can take up to try and arrive at insight into the teaching, but as an ongoing practice is it safe to try to be aware (**tape cuts off in mid-sentence**)

[Side 2]

S:you are all quite aware that it is now three o'clock and that it was one o'clock only a short time ago. One is actually quite aware of this but it's though when one's cravings are involved or one's attachments or addictions are involved one almost deliberately ignores or even tries to ignore or does one's best to ignore that fact which one knows very well, so as to guarantee for oneself the continued possession of an unchanging object which you enjoy or which you are attached to. Do you see what I mean? It isn't as though we need to remember impermanence, we're quite aware of it actually all the time. But we choose to forget. It's as though our desire that there should - or our wish that there should not be such a thing as impermanence in certain situations just gets the better of us, or we allow it to get the better of us. It seems more like that. So it's not so much a question of how to remember that everything is impermanent but how to prevent yourself from deliberately forgetting.

Are we such fools actually that we don't recognise that everything is impermanent? Of

course we're not. But it's only when a strong attachment develops within the mind, so when we become aware that this attachment is developing perhaps we should say to ourselves 'Look out, I'm going to start trying now if I'm not careful to see certain things as permanent.'

Manjuvajra: One of the classic answers that you get from people when you're trying to put across the idea of things being impermanent so therefore we shouldn't be attached to them, is that well, at least they exist for a little while, so during that little while why don't you enjoy them? And in a way that's doing what you've just said isn't it? That's saying well, we know they exist for a short time but let's pretend that they don't change. Let's pretend at least during that time that they are permanent.

S: Well, you don't have to do that in order to enjoy them. You can enjoy something knowing quite well that it is impermanent. You don't have to believe or you don't have to convince yourself that it is not impermanent in order to be able to enjoy it at all. You can enjoy a meal even though you know that the meal is only going to last fifteen or twenty minutes or at the most half an hour. But that knowledge doesn't prevent you from enjoying the meal.

Manjuvajra: It comes up more in discussions to do with really what you would call a hedonistic lifestyle, I think, you know one devoted to your own personal enjoyment and satisfaction on a material level. I usually counter that kind of philosophy by saying 'That's unsatisfactory because you're not getting anywhere, it doesn't progress.' Em...

S: Yes, all I think one can hope can happen here is not so much that the person will get tired of the enjoyment because they claim not ever to get tired of it. But what perhaps one can point out is that even though they may not get tired of the enjoyment as such, they will get tired in a more general way of not progressing and not developing. Because some people claim they are able to, with a little sort of careful arrangement just go on enjoying just one thing after another and that in fact they are quite satisfied with that and they don't ask for anything else from life. And even if you say 'Well when you get old or when you die etc etc' well, they'll say 'it hasn't happened yet and I'm quite happy to carry on as I am until that time comes' I think then all that one can really say to such people is that as a human being you have got another potential. You can say that I'm not running down pleasure and enjoyment and a sense of awareness in fact will help you to enjoy if anything all the more, a sense or awareness of impermanence will help you to enjoy all the more by ridding you of attachment which usually results in suffering. But nonetheless as a human being you have got a potentiality for development and for doing more than enjoying and even if you are not experiencing it now, a time will come when you will feel a definite lack or deficiency within yourself because you are not developing. Now they may counter that by saying, well, I don't feel any such thing. But you'll have to try to convince them on general intellectual grounds as it were that it is, so to speak, a natural thing for an individual human being to grow and to develop and to want to grow and to develop. That may be quite difficult I mean there are some people you may just have to leave for the time being, you know, just keep up friendly contact and hope that one day they will start feeling the need to develop.

But I think if a person claims to be enjoying himself and maybe honestly claims to be enjoying himself, to be getting a lot of pleasure out of life, I don't think it's a very helpful or a very convincing approach to try to convince him that he isn't in fact enjoying himself. Yes? You see what I mean? That actually it is he's leading a miserable life, well because that is not actually his experience. So probably the best that one can do is to point out that there are other potentialities which he has, which he is not realising and that at least in the long run, he will start feeling vaguely uncomfortable at least because he is not actualising those potentials, he'll feel vaguely dissatisfied.

Mangala: Couldn't like, let's say a spiritual path be presented as offering him even more

enjoyment than he's at present experiencing or of a different ...

S: (interrupting) Well, that could be a line of approach or attack, but he might not believe you. He might say, Well I'm pretty certain I wouldn't get as much pleasure out of meditation as I'd get, say, out of running after women. He might say, Well look at you, you claim to be getting so much enjoyment out of meditation but you still want food and you want this and you want that - it doesn't look as though meditation is all that enjoyable, because you don't spend very much time devoting yourself to it, maybe an hour or two a day. Whereas if it was as pleasurable as you claim you should be sitting there in that meditation room all day. (laughter)

You see what I mean? So it's not easy to counter the hedonistic approach to life. I think you have to speak more in terms of general human development.

Mangala: I think also like maybe sometimes people who are actually enjoying life are in fact more open to spiritual things maybe than people who aren't. I mean if they are actually pretty happy people they're less sort of reactive usually to ...

S: (interrupting) But you're speaking now in terms of people who are enjoying life but your expression was slightly different wasn't it? What did you actually say?

Manjuvajra: I said they're basing their direction of their life on their own pleasure and enjoyment.

S: Yes, they are as it were going in pursuit of pleasure, yes? Which is the as it were professional or convinced hedonist. But you're speaking of the person who is naturally happy. I think that is a different sort of person and yes, I would agree that the naturally happy person free from complications can quite easily I think get into spiritual life.

Devaraja: I'm not entirely convinced that is the situation. I think that if you're obviously happy, I mean on a deeper level, from the life that you're leading, then I think that even with the most hedonistically inclined person, it's a bit like something quite nagging. It's a bit like a burr or something like that that works their way into them - they get really curious and they keep trying to pull you out about what you're doing. I think if they feel that you aren't fundamentally different.

S: Mm, as though you ought to be hedonistic. Well look at you here you are with a good job, you're reasonably young, reasonably good looking, got the world before you as it were if not exactly at your feet, but some pretty good things are available to you, but you're not a hedonist. Here you are spending the greater part of your time - well, you're working to give your money to something, not to spend it on pleasure. Yes? And you spend quite a lot of time around a religious centre, you seem to go in for a certain amount of asceticism in their eyes. You don't eat meat, for one thing. And so on and so forth. So yes maybe that's why I think it's important for you to keep up contact with them, friendly contact because perhaps that could act as a sort of burr as Devaraja puts it and just sort of puzzle them and intrigue them and get them really thinking and in the end maybe a bit worried.

Devaraja: My experience is that people like that do get worried and it doesn't take very long.

Manjuvajra: But they can be quite stubborn on the intellectual level, and quite often they do tend to see things fairly intellectually so you have to approach it through argument.

S: Oh yes. We're of course assuming that the hedonist is a successful hedonist. Quite a lot

are professed hedonists but are not actual hedonists in a sense they don't really get all that much pleasure out of life, their pursuit of pleasure is not invariably successful. Sometimes it's even almost a pose. They of course are easier game so to speak but we're talking more about the successful genuine hedonist as it were, to the extent that there is such a thing! (laughter) A person who not only goes in pursuit of pleasure but actually manages to find that elusive thing.

Devaraja: This is hypothetical probably, but surely even a successful hedonist - his pleasure will be becoming more and more refined and in a way that might be bringing him around into a similar area of experience.

Manjuvajra: I think the opposite happens actually.

S: Yes, I would have said that the pursuit of pleasure coarsened you, unless you were consciously aiming at more and more refined pleasures.

Manjuvajra: Yes, I think it is a downward path.

S: For instance the elderly hedonist is almost a disgusting figure whereas the young hedonist is relatively tolerable. (pause)

Anyway how did we get onto hedonism? Is it from out of impermanence and seeing things are impermanent and so on and therefore not so - well not less pleasurable but ...

Manjuvajra: Not worthy of your -

S: - of your fixation. I think we have to steer a careful middle way here, because Buddhism is, you might say, healthily hedonistic and healthily aesthetic at the same time.

Manjuvajra: In the way that it doesn't deny that life is enjoyable and pleasurable but you don't actually go out and search for it.

S: Well, it doesn't deny that there are possibilities of pleasure, as it were. Not that life is pleasurable in the sense of being pleasurable all the time or even much of the time. But in a way it is surprising how little people enjoy life whether they are hedonists or not or whether they are professed hedonists or not. One would have thought that people actually would have enjoyed life more rather than less than they do, if you see what I mean.

Anyway we did talk about this yesterday didn't we? Perhaps it was in the other group. I sort of raised the question Why don't you sort of bound out of bed in the morning as soon as you wake up? Yes? With a joyful shout, looking forward to what you've got to do that day, hm? Because it's what you want to do. Well the reason is because usually it isn't what you want to do or at least that's part of the reason perhaps.

It's quite important when one is trying to communicate the Dharma also to try to communicate a sense of joy, which of course you've got to feel yourself to begin with. You can't sort of inculcate it on a purely theoretical basis.

Manjuvajra: Can I go back to one other thing you said. I'm not sure that I'm going to be able to ask this very clearly. When you are talking about the insubstantiality of material things, and of non-duality, that seems to suggest to me that there is a kind of sub-stratum consciousness below or above sensual experience that should be able to be contacted during life. Because if when you die you lost contact with your senses then the consciousness will continue in that substratum. Is that a valid way to look at things?

S: Well, according to the Mahayana the ultimate sub-stratum, so to speak, is sunyata. Do you see what I mean? That is the substratum upon which or within which all the differentiations which go to make up delusion take place. You are in fact in contact with sunyata all the time, so to speak, without realising it. It's just the differentiations that you make within sunyata which prevent you from seeing that what you are in contact with is in fact sunyata. Sunyata isn't sort of voidness in the literal sense, I think Guenther has made this point quite well, it is the unique undifferentiatedness of existence. It is existence as it is in its purity even free from the concepts of existence and non-existence, upon which you sort of superimpose all sorts of wrong ideas, among those wrong ideas being the idea of subject and object and things, and of course possessions, and so on. They all constitute the veil of the cognisables or even the veil of ignorance upon which you further superimpose the veil of the external defilements.

Strictly speaking Buddhism doesn't use the language of the substratum, not really, but one can make use of it in a free almost poetic kind of way. But it's not so much that you are based upon sunyata but there is sunyata above you and below you and on all sides of you. You are within that, so to speak, not that it is actually literally three-dimensional so to speak, it is multidimensional. And you have all sorts, all possible conceivable relationships with that, in a way without knowing it. It is this which you are in contact with all the time. It is this of which you are made. I mean this is what you are.

Manjuvajra: You need to be conscious of that for it to be real.

S: Yes.

Manjuvajra: If you were conscious of that, when you died your consciousness - in a way your consciousness wouldn't be disturbed because it would still be ...

S: (interrupting) It would remain conscious of that. The Yogacharins do think of that undifferentiated continuum in terms of an absolute mind or consciousness. The Madhyamika would not agree with that, it would regard that as being too much of a concession and as being in fact even a very fine veil in itself. The Yogacharins would not agree with that - they find it more meaningful in a way to speak of the undifferentiated continuum in terms of a citta - a mind. But sort of just a mind-stuff prior its being differentiated into subject and object. And they regard that as synonymous with sunyata.

Devaraja: You said we impose. I mean is that just a sort of linguistic limitation or ...

S: (interrupting) In a way, yes. We superimpose, but we ourselves are a superimposition, we ourselves as egos, we ourselves are - not only superimpose but are the superimposition. But which comes first; the egg or the chicken? But it is an unending circle simply because it is a circle as it were which the ego makes even when it is undoing the circle it is still the ego undoing. So even the way in which you see reality, even though you are seeing reality, cannot in a sense be also but be part of your delusion. This is why Buddhism says don't take any of the teachings as ultimate in the strict sense, they are just points of departure, they are just rafts. They are just vantage points from which you leap, or from which at least you take a good look.

You could give various illustrations, you could say Well look you take a piece of wood and you mark it off into inches. The inches are as it were superimposed upon the wood for certain practical conveniences. The inches are not in the wood. You could say in a manner of speaking that piece of wood does consist of a number of inches. But in a sense again it doesn't. So the piece of wood undivided into inches is like sunyata. When you start sort of

imagining it as divided into inches, well, that is what the Yogacharins would call the abhutaparikalpa - the unreal imagination. And when you start making use of or making use of the wood as divided into inches, for certain practical purposes, well those are all the activities you set up on the basis of that original ignorance. Do you see what I mean?

Or you meet somebody and you don't see him as just a human being - you see him as belonging to a particular nationality or belonging to a particular religion, in a sense all those things are superimpositions upon the original human being and which prevent you from seeing him. So we treat the whole of existence like this, this is the point of view of the Mahayana especially. We are constantly superimposing on the basic reality of things, of life if you like, in accordance with our own preconceived ideas, projections, subjective demands expectations and so on.

So perhaps it is better to think more in that sort of way and think of sunyata as being that sort of reality, that very alive reality which is left, so to speak, when all these superimpositions have been removed, including ourselves. But not that we die, or just nothing is left, because what we think of as ourself is both reality and superimposition. So even if the superimposition goes, the reality is left, the reality of us so to speak is left. There is not annihilation.

Manjuvajra: It's expansion.

S: Well you could - yes - speak of it as expansion. Except expansion suggests just one or at the most two or even three dimensions but here there are many more. In a sense an infinity of dimensions involved.

Mangala: So could you say that there is awareness but no 'I' who is aware?

S: Mm yes. Well sometimes the tradition does speak of an awareness, of a consciousness which is not anybody's consciousness nor conscious of any thing. Which is something that we can't really conceive of because in conceiving of it we think of it as an object and thereby distort it. Gampopa speaks of the Dharmadhatu I think as a 'pure non-dual shine'. That is to say it is a shining which is not anything shining nor shining on anything. It is simply light.

Mangala: So it is all one. (laughter)

S: Except that there isn't anything to be one, if you see what I mean. Anyway we're being rather metaphysical this afternoon aren't we? [Laughter] Perhaps we'd better come right down to earth and go on to the ten things to be done.

III. The Ten Things to be Done

(1) Attach thyself to a religious preceptor endowed with spiritual power and complete knowledge.

S: So you notice that here the precept speaks in terms of attaching oneself to a religious preceptor whereas under the 'Ten Requirements' the precept spoke of choosing a guru. Do you think that this difference of emphasis has any significance? Is there a difference between choosing and attaching oneself to? We weren't very happy or at least I wasn't very happy with the whole idea of choosing a guru as though you actually could or were qualified to do so. But what about attaching yourself to?

Mangala: I think the difference here is that the preceptor is one who has got spiritual power and complete knowledge so in a way it wouldn't do any harm to attach yourself to somebody

like that. You might be well advised to ...

S: (interrupting) But that suggests that you can recognise such a person, doesn't it? But to me attaching oneself to suggests a more natural process. Choosing seems to be more deliberate, calculated, do you see what I mean? Whereas attachment seems to be something that will develop, you just happen to meet someone, then you meet them again, and you start gravitating towards them. It seems that when one does come into contact with spiritual friends generally including say the religious preceptor or the guru it is something more like this which actually happens.

_____: Could you say that you grow towards them?

S: You could say you grow towards them, yes. I mean though I was rather hard on this idea of choosing a guru - yesterday? I think, was it yesterday - nonetheless one can't exclude the possibility of something happening like what happened in the case of Milarepa when he just heard the name of Marpa, he just heard the name and he at once felt well this is the guru for me. But you couldn't say it was a choosing. Because it's not as though he'd heard about Marpa and then chose him. When he heard the name he was so attracted, spontaneously, irresistibly. So he attached himself to Marpa, he couldn't help doing that. It was more like that. So it's as though if you are in contact with any good spiritual friend and keep up the contact and are reasonably receptive, reasonably open, you will start becoming attached - clearly attached here is being used in a positive sense. You will start becoming attached.

I remember in this connection, I've mentioned it before, a friend of mine in Bombay saying "Religious people are always talking about detaching and being detached but", he said, "actually that's all wrong, that's too negative, they should be talking in terms of being attached and attaching oneself to what is good, to what is spiritual, to an ideal." So it's a bit like that here. The word 'attach' is being used in that sort of way quite positively. So "Attach thyself to a religious preceptor" which doesn't mean choose one in a deliberate calculating way. It doesn't mean grab one or go in pursuit of one. It means just establish contact with somebody, some spiritual friend, be open and allow yourself to be drawn into contact and to be influenced even. This is what it means.

So "Attach thyself to a religious preceptor endowed with spiritual power and complete knowledge." So you see the two things are mentioned - spiritual power and knowledge. Why do you think those two are specially mentioned, what do you think is meant by spiritual power? And why? Why is spiritual power mentioned? Do you think this could perhaps be misunderstood?

Nagabodhi: (Or it could mean) with spiritual experience, with spiritual depth.

S: Spiritual depth. But also perhaps one could say in more simple terms especially as and when one is dealing with say spiritual friends, kalyana mitras, in the more ordinary sense yes? Something that may be falling short of a religious preceptor or guru proper. Spiritual power suggests energy. Not just ordinary physical energy, not even ordinary - what shall I say? - emotional energy but I mean energy which comes from leading a concentrated integrated, possibly meditative, life. So energy is important because unless there is energy in the religious preceptor or the spiritual friend, energy will not be stimulated or sparked off or encouraged in the pupil or the friend or the disciple. Do you see what I mean? So spiritual power in a sense of energy, even spiritual energy, if one can use that expression, is absolutely necessary, and, of course, complete knowledge. I mean complete knowledge, that's quite a lot to ask for. That suggests a Buddha. And how complete is complete? Perhaps all that one can hope for is sufficient for the purpose. Sufficient for your purpose.

There is in the Mahayana in connection with the Prajnaparamita a distinction between (Sarvajnata) which is sometimes translated as all-knowledge or omniscience and Sarakajnana - knowledge of all the modes. So omniscience is not enough, you've got to go beyond omniscience, which in a way is a bit ridiculous, but in a way is highly suggestive eh? Ordinary omniscience is not enough (laughter)

There has to be Sarvakarajnana which is - knowledge of all the modes, that is, all the different spiritual paths and the practices pertaining to them, not just enough for your own purposes but enough to be able to guide all sorts of beings of so many different kinds. This is what the bodhisattva needs. But so far as the ordinary spiritual aspirant is concerned, he just needs to be in contact with someone who knows enough for his own immediate purpose, that is to say, the purpose of the disciple. You don't need a fully enlightened Buddha to begin with, to lead you. As I've said on other occasions you probably wouldn't recognise him if you met him. As Gampopa says in the *'Jewel Ornament of Liberation'* you need just a good spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being.

But you need someone who knows something more than you do. So "Attach thyself to a religious preceptor endowed with spiritual power" - that is to say energy, even spiritual energy - "and knowledge" - knowledge of the spiritual path to a greater, if possible a far greater degree than you have.

Perhaps energy and personal experience would be a good paraphrase here. Not so much "spiritual power and complete knowledge", but energy and personal experience. Spiritual energy though that isn't a very happy expression. I have noticed and I've been told that what attracts people perhaps more than anything else to a centre is just the energy, the joyful energy which is around, hopefully, ideally, at the centre to which they happen to go.

Energy means life. Energy means the possibility of development. Energy means the possibility of growth. But it must be directed, it must be unified, integrated, properly oriented, smoothly running energy not chaotic, dispersed, unmindful energy. So I'm sure those who take classes at centres will know from their own experience that if you have more of energy - not just of course crude physical energy - but if you have emotional energy and hopefully spiritual energy then people do get much more attracted and you are able to communicate the Dharma much more successfully. And if you have some knowledge too, well so much the better. But even knowledge, without that energy and inspiration to back it up, doesn't carry you very far. You notice this with some of the Theravada groups and movements - there's quite a lot of knowledge around, they do know their Pali texts pretty well very often, they do know their Dharma pretty well very often, but there's not much in the way of energy, there's not much in the way of life. So they tend to attract people just in search of information, not people who are in search of the means of following a spiritual path or guidance in following a spiritual path.

Mangala: I suppose a balance is needed here or well isn't it like a (S: yes) energy and wisdom.

S: So it becomes very important to, as it were, maintain one's energy level. Or to maintain one's energy at a high level if one - well for one's own sake if one has no responsibilities with or for other people and for the sake of others also if one is engaged in taking classes. There is nothing I would think more discouraging than to go along to a class and find it's being taken by a tired washed out sort of person, however good in a way his material may otherwise be. So I think it is incumbent upon those who do take classes to make sure they arrive at the class pretty sprightly with energy and enthusiasm, if possible inspiration, and are able to communicate something of that. A half-dead Order Member is of no use to anyone.

I'm sure those who actually do take classes have learned this lesson a good time ago and know it only too well. (pause)

All right number two second of the ten things to be done - (laughter from Manjuvajra) - What's that?

Manjuvajra: I was thinking: yes, you've learned it but don't always do anything about it - maybe I should only speak for myself -

S: Well, why do you think that is? Why not? Is it just lack of time or is it lack of care or what? Lack of conviction?

Manjuvajra: I should say it's, a combination of lack of time and lack of care. I mean I think if one cared sufficiently then you could make the time but it's ... you know there are other demands and the care isn't -

S: (interrupting) Even distractions sometimes.

Manjuvajra: In my own case I go into classes straight from work.

S: It could mean going in a heightened state of energy.

Manjuvajra: What going from work? (**S:** - Yes) It depends what sort of work you are doing.

S: Well you feel perhaps you ought to go first home to the community, have a rest, a cup of tea and a quiet think eh? Even a short meditation and then go to the class.

Manjuvajra: Well I reckon I would really need about an hour of that.

S: (interrupting) Well that's reasonably good actually if you can sort of collect your energies for a class really adequately just within the hour so to speak. You could probably function reasonably well even going straight from work. But perhaps you could function even better if you did give yourself that hour in between. Maybe leave work an hour earlier that day, make arrangements to do that. (laughter)

Manjuvajra: It's difficult when you're only getting three hours -

S: (interrupting) I'm sure it is. Depending on what you do.

Manjuvajra: You're right. I mean one should care enough about classes to do that whether - no matter what happens.

S: To be at your best, to be able to give of your best. (pause) Any other confessions?

Nagabodhi: I find on the whole I can pull it out of the bag from any kind of state I'm in. I amaze some people, they see me turn up at the centre looking like a hearse ought to be ordered (laughter) but once I'm actually out there and maybe getting into giving a talk the subject matter usually actually inspires me. But I find if I do have some time off, I have to travel to the typesetters during the afternoon, I've just got some time on the train I just have a feeling of depth and contact with the material and the people which is just so good, it's a luxury, it's a lovely feeling to have that kind of ... it's just kind of more ... the whole thing just feels like it's got substance.

S: One just has to be careful that what one is pulling out of the air is actually inspiration and not just a bit more nervous energy. Yes? But I know from my own experience you can just pull it from out of the air, that is possible if you are of a certain constitutional type, as it were. I don't think everybody can do it but some can.

Devaraja: I sort of feel that - I don't know if there is a direct relationship but - when you are not at your best or you're not kind of like fully rested, I'm assuming that there is a relationship, usually that your presentation of the meditation is not quite as hopeful as it should be.

Nagabodhi: Hopeful? You mean it's not as -

Devaraja: Well, I mean you make it sound like it's going to be that much more difficult.

S: I think one can get very quickly and even easily sparked off by the happy expectant faces that you see sitting in front of you row upon row as eagerly awaiting it, so to speak. This can be very encouraging and stimulating even inspiring.

Manjuvajra: I find beginners' classes much easier to take than the Mitra group for example.

S: Well the Mitras are more experienced and a bit more sceptical, [Laughter] maybe they know you a bit already and they are just wondering whether you're going to give them the same talk that you gave them six months ago because you haven't had time to prepare a new one or whether they are going to get something new and interesting this time. Whereas in the case of completely new people even if you have said it a dozen times before, it's new to them and you get their response. And then you as it were feed a bit upon that and you can give them again something maybe genuinely new with freshness of inspiration.

Manjuvajra: Interest seems to be an important factor for me like if somebody I'm talking to is interested in what I'm saying I get a lot more energy.

S: That is certainly true, yes. To some extent it has to be a two way process. You can't just sort of feed passive semi- willing people with information.

Mangala: There's nothing worse than seeing dead faces. I mean there's no response, it's really killing sometimes.

S: Yes. Quite a few Order Members and Mitras have said recently that they find it very refreshing to attend beginners' classes and contact the enthusiasm of beginners. It's a pity in a way that that is ever lost by anybody. But I think it is because the newness and novelty of things tends to wear off if you're not careful. You start thinking well you've heard it all before. You're hearing it now for the umpteenth time and it's old so and so who gave that same talk somewhere else a few weeks earlier. It isn't as new as it sounds, he's just dressed it up a bit for the occasion.

Mangala: The thing too about taking a class is that you can almost be saying the same things every week but like if I can see different people there or an interest, well in a way it doesn't really matter cos it -

S: It doesn't feel the same thing at all. Even if you are in a sense explaining the same old four stages of the Mindfulness of Breathing, if you've got new people in front of you, you just forget everything you've ever said before about it, you just start afresh. Then it can be new for you, as well as for the people that you are talking to. Yes? And they can feel something new coming from you even though you have in a sense said it all and explained it all before.

I think to come back to the more general question of energy, I really think that one of the things that people must be really careful of, especially people who are taking classes and most of all the chairmen - I have mentioned this before, but I'll mention it again - not to get physically tired. To get enough sleep and enough rest. I think this is quite important. Because if habitually you are not getting enough sleep, not enough physical relaxation, not enough rest, it will tell upon you in a general way. You must be careful that you very rarely if ever miss a good night's sleep. That is all the more important as you get more and more responsibilities. Yes? I mean some people need

[End of Tape Five]